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VAGARIES OF VANDYKE BROWNE.



VAGARIES
OF
VANDYKE BROWNE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN VERSE.

BY WILLIAM P. BRANNAN., *1825-1866.*

RIDE SI SAPIS



CINCINNATI:
R. W. CARROLL & CO., PUBLISHERS,
73 WEST FOURTH STREET,
OPERA-HOUSE BUILDING.
1865.

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DEDICATION.

APR 25 1980

BB



TO MARCUS AURELIUS FINCH.

My outward life is noteless in the crowd;
I shrink from show and glare and wordy war —
And such low-cunning tricks as sometimes mar
Those names that else had made Fame over-proud.
My lonely life once — in my hour of need —
You sought, in such a gentle, quiet guise,
That, unawares, you read my hungry eyes —
Saw my starved soul within, and knew its creed;
Your liberal heart and generous nature then
Drew tears of joy from eyes unused to weep,
And from your manhood came inspirings deep
That taught new faith to bless my fellow-men.
Need I say more? My virtues, though but few,
I dedicate, my dearest friend, to you.

WILLIAM P. BRANNAN.

CINCINNATI, *March 4, 1865.*

SONNET. HEART-MUSIC.

WHEN his exploring hand hath touched the strings
That vibrate music in the human heart,
The Poet wakes to the Divinity of Art,
And Nations lean and listen whilst he sings.
The world now kindly blesses him with bread,
Weeps his past woes — rejoices in his joy —
Cares for the comfort of her minstrel boy —
And weaves rare crowns for his exalted head.
New lights break in, and his forgotten life
Becomes transfigured by the glorious rays,
And faces glow and sparkle in his praise,
Whilst earnest voices swell the loving strife.
Fierce storms of fate pursue his steps no more,
And rainbows bloom where all was black before.

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PROLOGUE.



SONNET. GOLDEN SHREDS.

BLEST is the Miser who has hoards of gold
In secret nooks secure. O heavy loss
If thieves prevail; all else is but as dross
That wins no welcome, bars no heat nor cold —
Nor hunger pangs, nor evil-eyed despairs.

I am a Miser — of some shreds of thought,
Picked from the path where cruel thorns have
caught
The tattered robes of genius unawares.
These golden shreds with miser greed I hold,
And with grim patience strive to interweave
A garment, which my pilgrim soul may leave,
To mark my footsteps on life's thorny wold.
These hoarded treasures of my jealous care
Feed my starved soul and warm life's wintry air.





THE OLD CHURCH ROAD.

WINDING through the everglade
Where my schoolboy scenes were laid ;
Near the meadow where the bees
Tell their thefts to every breeze :
Where the woodland flowers bloom,
Wasting all their sweet perfume ;
Passing by a cottage door,
Now — alas ! my home no more ;
Leading to the house of God,
Is the blessed Old Church Road.

Ambushed in a bower of green,
Yonder spire is dimly seen,
Like a sentry from on high
Pointing upward to the sky ;
In that pleasant ambuscade,
Checkered by the sun and shade,
Stands the church where first I trod
In the way that leads to God ;
Now I drag life's weary load
Up along the Old Church Road.

I have come to see, once more,
The dear haunts I loved of yore.
Comrades of my early years,
Where are now your smiles and tears —
Smiles of welcome, tears of joy
Greeting home the long lost boy?
Silence palls my listening ear,
No familiar voice is here ;
On the gravestone gray and cold
The sad tale is briefly told ;
They have spent their latest breath
In the holiday of death ;
Tired with life, they fell asleep,
Leaving me alone to weep, —
Who would fain lay down life's load
With them, near the Old Church Road.

Cruel memory, let me deem
This is but a painful dream !
There was one — O heart, be still ! —
Wont to wander near the rill, —
Murmuring yet along the glade
Where our plighted vows were made, —
There was one, the maiden queen
Reigning o'er this rural scene,
Who had strayed from paradise
With the splendor of its skies
Sleeping in her dewy eyes :
Nevermore must I rejoice
In the music of her voice ?

Must the pilgrim's lonely tread
Wake but echoes o'er the dead,
As he nears his last abode
On the blessed Old Church Road?

Where the modest violets bloom
In the shadow of her tomb,
Shall the wayworn wanderer rest,
Deeming death a welcome guest?
Life's last sleep were passing sweet
When his dust with thine shall meet;
There, beneath the selfsame sod,
Lay him, near the Old Church Road.





VAGARIES OF VANDYKE BROWNE.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN VERSE.



CANTO I.

"The time is out of joint:—O cursed spite!
That ever I was born to set it right."

HAMLET.

I.

PREPARE for rhyme, I'll publish right or
wrong,
Sang Byron, when his muse was young and
fiery;

Prepare, for rhyme's the burden of my song,
Though my Pegasus bolts in regions miry:
A "scrub race" on the "track" may bring a throng
To view my "canter" in a rhyming diary;
And, should I win the "handicap" of glory,
The muddy mob will keep alive my story.

II.

Much for myself, in truth, I cannot speak ;

I have "small Latin" and some French quotations ;
Can tell, at sight, an alphabet that 's Greek,

And *printed language* of most foreign nations.
Of "roots" I 'm certain I should know a "leek"

From "parsnips," "carrots," and such other rations :
To parent stems—I cannot trace word-foundlings,
Nor dig up roots, like philologic groundlings.

III.

No Alma Mater trained my twig of life,

However warped or twisted or inclining :—
In my mind's garden weeds and flowers grew rife,
The fruitful buds with worthless sprouts entwining :
Thus good and ill, and love and hate and strife,
Mar human shoots almost beyond refining ;
And careless culture leaves our manhood reaping
A crop of useless weeds through years of weeping.

IV.

And yet *Poeta nascitur non fit*,

Shall be my motto on this great occasion ;
Although my muse her lamp hath never lit

With ancient lore, to lend illumination ;
Which means, I hold, that true poetic wit

Was never gained by classic education ;
My motto claims—and all the world shall know it—
That I was born a veritable poet !

V.

And in this war and Freedom-loving age,
When every man and woman is a writer,
'T would be unwise for soldier, saint, or sage,
Who should neglect to be his own inditer;
To take one's life in biographic rage,
Alike becomes the quaker and the fighter;
And those who strive not for the Bay or Laurel
Are arrant cowards in life's glorious quarrel!

VI.

And why not write, since Alexander Smith
Star gazes in a moonstruck melodrama?
Defies the world, and proves himself no myth,
But true to nature — like a panorama;
And quite as real as a frothy frith —
And doubtless worshipped — like the sacred Lama.
If Smith has shown his fame is no misnomer,
Why can't a Browne or Muggins write like Homer?

VII.

Was born, say Anno Domini and blank,
Within a castle, cabin, or a cottage;
In high or low — or of the middle rank —
And fed on princely food or poor man's pottage —
The writer of these rhymes; who now is lank
And lean and hunger-eyed; yet ere his dotage
Has followed the advice of sage Cellini —
Which may be best explained in *nota bene*.

VIII.

Yet why explain, when every reader knows
Cellini was an Artist and a Roman,
Whose fame's eternal as the Alpine snows.

In curious skill he was surpassed by no man :
He loved his friends and fiercely fought his foes ;
Lived fast, as artists do — was not a slow man —
But wrote and wrought, and left his name on pages
That will endure, like these, for many ages !

IX.

In short, he wrote his life in manly prose —
Though not averse to terse and polished verses, —
And urged on all, who either could or chose,
To follow his example without surcease :
Although beset by agonizing throes, —
Such as all misers feel who lose their purses, —
He doubtless thought that I — and even you too —
Might thus become as great as Benvenuto.

X.

But what he thought when he advised each man
To take his life in biographic measure,
Is neither here nor there ; do as you can,
Or will, or *wont* ; or as you have the leisure ;
For my part, I thus choose the simple plan
Of jotting mine down for my own good pleasure ;
It also may amuse my "poor relations"
In time to come — through many generations !

XI.

That I was born somewhere in time and space,
My readers now, I trust, will take for granted;
The place I hold among the human race
Is much too high for fears of being taunted;
Of course these rhymes will prove I 've gifts and
 grace;
A will to dare — that never yet was daunted;
And like Professor Holmes, who pleads my cause well,
I thus resolve myself to mine own Boswell.

XII.

The artist who essays to paint his face
For future fame, and unborn eyes to gladden,
May be excused, though he should fail to trace
Those furrows of despair that tend to sadden;
If with a master touch he limns each grace,
Until he looks Apollo — or Aladdin —
Yet still a likeness, in transfiguration —
May well deserve the critic's approbation.

XIII.

Yet will I not make any such a plea;
I 've no desire that my pen-portrait please all;
If not an Artist too — as you will see —
I know at least the palette from the easel; —
My faults are founded on the family-tree,
Not one of which I 'll soften, though I tease all,
Even should I stare a gorgon or a wizard —
Or any ogre spelt from a to izzard.

XIV.

I do not mean by this that I am worse,
Or better, than the man that is my neighbor;
The least eventful life is worth a verse,
Or something more, of biographic labor,
If true to nature what we there rehearse;
Of him that reigns, or he that plays the tabor:
The simplest life of every man or woman
Has unlike touches, wayward, strange, and human.

XV.

No oaks were struck from heaven at my birth;
No luckless crows foretold a life-long evil;
No mountains shook, nor yawned the sleepy earth,
And thunder-storms themselves were more than
civil;
No drouth proclaimed a lengthened siege of dearth,
And doubtless some kind saint beguiled the devil;
The world wagged on as steady and as stable
As at the birth of Cain—or pious Abel.

XVI.

'T is said that my first effort was a shriek,
Which plainly told I was alive and kicking;
That this was followed by a futile freak
To box the nurse and give her fistic licking;
With other things, as silly and as weak
As e'er was told of pauper, prince, or viking:
The noise I made, let who will like or lump it,
I still continue—blowing my own trumpet!

XVII.

This blushing into life 's a curious thing,
And must give rise to very queer sensations ;
If one could recollect and say or sing
Life's first emotions on the stage of nations,
The offspring of a peasant, or a king —
Born in a hut, or palace 'mid ovations —
Would rise at once to more than regal splendor,
In point of fame, for one so young and tender!

XVIII.

O new-born infant! Can't you give a clue
That will unravel antenatal notions?
Tell if the soul which now belongs to you
E'er trod this earth in manhood's fair proportions;
Lived, loved, and died, and gave the grave its due;
What were its aspirations and emotions?
O tongue-tied clod! Relieve a fellow-mortal
Who fain would look beyond life's morning portal.

XIX.

And is it true, what Epicurus taught,
That soul and body have but earthly sources;
That no immortal spark was ever caught
To blaze in glory o'er our dust-claimed corses?
Shall all our hopes, with heavenward longings fraught,
Be quenched in death like mortal dogs and horses —
And our fine clay become the coarse material
To nourish noisome weeds, or wholesome cereal?

XX.

O can it be, that in the distant vale

Which lies beyond the dark and Stygian river,
There is a land of blessedness and bale

Where nameless joys and woes exist forever?
And will not deathless pangs and prayers prevail

To win a respite from the Eternal Giver?
In vain all questions. Blessed are the holy
Who walk the footsteps of the "meek and lowly."

LIFE IN DEATH.

I.

UP from the South a gust of summer air,

With scent of odorous blooms, now fanned my
cheek;

Puffed from my brow the fever-pain of care,
And whispered raptures to my spirit weak.

II.

And murmuring sounds of sweetly dying song,

With burdens even Love would faint to bear,
Were echoed from the hills where human wrong
Has never knelt in anguish and despair.

III.

Recalled to life, my soul once more arose

And donned the garb that drapes our mortal clay,
Out through the portals passed where friends and foes
With ceaseless strife fight through life's little day.

IV.

Once more an atom on the shores of time;

Once more a unit in the fields of space;

Once more a stranger in a world of crime—

A poor, lost pilgrim of the human race!



CANTO II.



I.



LEFT myself within the nurse's arms,
 Mewling, et cætera, as most children do;
 A thoughtless infant in a world of harms,
 Not knowing right from wrong or old' from new;
 Pleased like a fireman at all false alarms,
 And blinking at all things that came to view —
 A purblind morsel, bidding life good-morrow —
 A helpless insect in a world of sorrow.

II.

I might digress and spin a lengthy ode
 On wars at home, or o'er the dismal ocean,
 (Yet do not wish by any means to load
 My willing muse, or shock her pure devotion,)
 Until each line with sanguine fury glowed,
 And all my readers trembled with emotion:
 But I prefer a private lamentation
 As one less likely to disturb the nation.

III.

For tireless readers I have no such boon
As endless writing ; therefore they may think ill
That I don't prophecy ere many a moon,
The world in wisdom will receive a wrinkle,
When any man may call for his balloon
And sail from Maine to Texas in a twinkle ;
But Wise-men know and Lowe-men have a notion
That, soon or late, balloons will cross the ocean.

IV.

I'm neither prophet, priest, nor yet physician ;
Clairvoyant power is not within my rôle ;
It may be that the latest expedition,
That now is searching for the northern pole,
Will find itself in just the right condition
To plant a colony at "Symmes's hole ;" —
I've no desire to be the great Apollo
To sing the praises of a world so hollow !

V.

Within that precinct I don't care to enter,
Where skyward clouds the blue vault never dapples :
There may be Adams in this world's great centre,
There may be Eves — there also may be apples !
And doubtless Satan reigns the chief tormentor,
Who with those inland ghouls has fearful grapples ;
For none can get so far below earth's level
As to escape from that arch fiend, the devil.

VI.

I like a skilful mariner who trims
His sails, though torn to shreds like wornout towels ;
I like the theory of Captain Symmes,
And mean no slur to dwellers of earth's bowels ;
If I don't understand, 't is distance dims
My mental vision ; as I know not how else
I could be blind to such a race of groundlings
Who, after all, may prove celestial foundlings.

VII.

This outside world has other fish to fry —
The inside world has doubtless fish that's odder,
A scaly set I'll mention by and by ;
Meantime I lack for bread and human fodder ;
Poor larders make poor work, you'll not deny —
There's none who labors like your well-fed plodder ;
The pangs of hunger make men feel satanic,
And fit for treason, stratagem, and panic.

VIII.

When Otway, Chatterton, and Burns and Poe
Starved on their laurels, I've no right to grumble ;
As Famine's fiend has been each poet's foe
From Homer down to writers still more humble,
Who fain would beg, with bleeding feet and slow,
For unpicked bones a dog would scorn to mumble ;
When such as those have died from inanition,
I have no cause to growl at my condition.

IX.

I will not play the Lazarus in these lays,
Nor beg the crumbs from any rich man's table;
Though Divè's die, I will not sing his praise
Nor cool his torments, though I should be able;
I'd rather toil with those who seek to raise
Another tower as high as ancient Babel,
And feed on husks and herbs, in peace and quiet,
Than play the toady at a rich man's riot.

X.

I left myself—I think I said before—
An infant Newton, with the “globes” at play;
Whilst native instinct taught me to explore
The mysteries that hid the “milky way”;
Now—lacking food—those lacteal joys once more
Steal o'er my sense with albulactic sway,
Until I wish, in prose or song or ode,
My lot were cast where milk and honey flowed.

XI.

The Jews, when searching for the promised land,
Received a daily lunch of quails and manna;
The ravens fed Elijah “out of hand”
Whilst in a cave or desolate savanna;
Alas! for me all food is contraband,
Of North, or South where grows the rich banana.
With phantom food, perforce, I cram my maw full,
Nor dare partake of feasts that are unlawful.

XII.

To thoughtless clods there's nothing in the clouds
But rain and vapor, lightning, hail, or thunder;
To some the sable pall or silver shrouds —
Or Titan shapes — which only makes them wonder;
I have no patience with such soulless crowds,
Whom nature made in some odd freak or blunder;
My Cloudland castles yield me ceaseless pleasure
And heavenly yearnings: — but I'll change the measure.

CLOUDLAND PILGRIMS.

I.

UPON an afternoon in life
I gazed from out the walls of strife
Where sloping skies with clouds were rife.

II.

And marching onward, two and two,
With chantings solemn, strange, and new,
Crowned Cloudland figures filled my view.

III.

Now sunlight forms serenely fair,
Anon, impalpable as air,
They came and went, yet still were there.

IV.

“And who,” I said within my breast,
“Can be those saint-like spirits blest
That wander thus in sweet unrest?”

V.

An angel-whispered voice replied,
“The Bards that sung, and starved, and died,
Whom after-times have deified;

VI.

“For, ever since the world began,
The Poet, Prophet, Seer, or Man,
That urged great truths was under ban;

VII.

“And, if the world should be defied
By one who flatters not its pride,
The cry is, ‘Have him crucified!’”

VIII.

Still onward passed those bards of old
Within a sunset lap of gold,
Enshrined in glories manifold.

IX.

Their harps with mystic music rang,
In heavenly harmony they sang —
I listened with a pleasing pang.

X.

Forever in my breast and brain
Will live the soul-enchancing strain,
Beyond old Time and Death's domain.

XI.

It might have been a dream; perchance
It was a soul-inspiring trance,
In which I saw those forms advance.

XII.

The sun is diving down the west,
The purple wave-cloud bathes his breast
Whilst sinking to his regal rest.

XIII.

And now, receding from my view,
Those pilgrims, marching two and two,
Are lost within the distant blue.


XIV.

Thus fading from my helpless sight,
And leaving me in hopeless night,
They journey on to endless light.



CANTO III.

I.

HAT cramps and colics, fever, pains, and
stitches

Beset "my soul in arms," I now forget;
How I was tortured by the "spouks" and witches
My Grand'am conjured, still has power to fret;
And as for "cuffs" and "spanks" and birchen switches,
Their stings and tingles linger with me yet.
My infant mind, thus forced with useful knowledge,
Prepared my entrance to a life-long college.

II.

My schoolboy days with petty ills were strung;
With crotchets, quavers, pothooks, Pike, and tram-
mels;
With tasks, like Sysiphus, my soul was wrung—
Such burdens dire as break the backs of camels;
Yet I'll not prose of wearied brain and lung,
Of toilsome days and nights, or I should d—n else;
And I'll not tell my readers, lest I bore 'em,
How long I lingered on *Pons Asinorum*.

III.

My head was puzzled much with Murray's Grammar —
 "I love," "she loves," and such like verbal lore ;
With rules and cases I was forced to clamor,
 Until I ruled each case a cursed bore ;
And as for gender—but I dare not d—n her —
 (The feminine) my heart is yet too sore !
What part of speech was *no* ? I could not guess
When told two negatives agreed with *yes* !

IV.

Hence, if my words should choose to limp and halt,
 And "lisp in numbers" in these moody rhymes,
'T will give to persons, versed in finding fault,
 A joy intense to score grammatic crimes ;
Then let their adverbs make a fierce assault,
 And interjections stab my helpless chimes ;
The whilst they storm me with "ten parts of speech,"
Until I can't read, write, nor speak, nor screech.

V.

In course of time I taught myself to draw,
 And grew apace in childhood's faults and foibles ;
At hoop and kite and all the games I saw
 Took part, and even joined a choir in warbles ;
As life advanced the game I played at "taw"
 Was founded on the famous "Elgin marbles" ;
But ere I took to charcoal, chalk, or easels,
I'd passed through whooping-cough, the mumps, and
 measles.

VI.

Alas for boyhood days, forever fled!

Which fancy paints in rose and pink and azure;
Now curtain-pictures round my sleepless bed

Remind me of my lost youth's dearest treasure,
When blue-eyed nymphs possessed my heart and head,

And I wrote rhymes devoid of sense and measure,
Of which the lines below may prove a sample —
An in-verse ratio of a bad example.

THE DREAM OF YOUTH.

I.

O GIVE me back my dream of youth,

When every pulse throbbed wild and gay;
My heart's sweet spring-time, when life's flowers
Bewildering bloomed along my way;

When all the world was paradise,

And pleasure held a sov'reign sway;

When every change brought new delight —

And all the blessed year was May.

II.

O give again those rapturous hours,

When first my soul with beauty thrilled,
And lost in ecstasy I dared

To love, nor cared if loving killed;

When every radiant face I saw
 Flashed with enchantment on my brain,
Till earth seemed changing spheres with heaven —
 O give to me that dream again !

III.

O give me back my boyhood's dream ;
 Those gleams of glory from above ;
That faith which told me all was true
 In friendship, honor, and in love ;
Ere yet the false and heartless world
 Had bade me welcome with the rest,
And taught the nothing of a name —
 That life, love, friendship, were a jest :

IV.


Those aspirations for a fame
 Immortal through all coming time ;
That hope which soared on angel wings
 From gladsome earth to heights sublime ;
O give to me that dream again
 Which riots in my soul to-day —
That earnest and exulting youth
 When all the blessed year was May !



CANTO IV.



I.

 HAD a strange odd appetite for books,
And relished much my feast of "Lamb"
or "Bacon ;"

"Hogg's Tales" were stored in several quiet nooks
Where I might taste them with my favorite "Lacon."
"Crabbe" eased my hunger near the sea-side brooks —
And for the rest — or I must be mistaken —
I chewed or bolted like a gormandizer,
A hungry bookworm, or a half-starved miser.

II.

John Dryden was the Dominie of Pope, —
So Johnson says, the polyglottic writer, —
Who lacked his teacher's wondrous power and scope,
Yet was more polished as a verse inditer ;
In short, with whom few modern bards can cope
In grace and ease ; and none have been politer
In paying compliments to the nobility,
Without a taint of what is called servility.

III.

One would suppose, from Byron's fierce defence
Of St. John's bard, he loved him as a master;
Be that as 't may — at least he showed much sense
In scoring down the strictures of a Pastor;
For, with a vigor bitter and intense,
He drew a blister — like a "poor man's plaster" —
And played at Bowles, the Public keeping tally,
Like making "ten strikes" in a bowling-alley.

IV.

Men are but monkeys of a larger growth,
And what they do is done by imitation;
Your sculptors, Titians, Miltons, and so forth,
Were merely apes — with a slight variation;
To doubt their greatness I would be as loath
As any man of taste and cultivation;
Who does not understand must be a flunkey —
The greatest man is but — the greater monkey.

V.

The point above, distinctly understood,
Will place me right with all my gentle readers;
If what I pen should not turn out so good
As Shakspeare's, Shelley's, and such other leaders,
To their dull thinking, it may be the mood
They read in; for your careless heeders
Might deem these lines, so brilliant and defiant,
The slipshod efforts of a Read or Bryant!

VI.

I do not mean that either Read or Bryant
Have ever done the "slop-shop" in their lays,
Or worked up "shoddy" in a way defiant
Of their just claim to green, immortal bays —
But that, sometimes, an intellectual giant
May whistle to himself in common ways;
Shake hands with Smith or Browne, and talk of
horses,
And, for a time, ignore the world's applauses.

VII.

I would not wound their feelings for the world,
Nor say a word to check their "good digestion";
The sails of my small craft should all be furled,
Her cargo tabooed, contraband, and fustian,
Ere from her deck a single shell were hurled:—
To chop cold logic on a previous question
Were better far—I say it without flattery—
Than wasting powder on their bomb-proof battery.

VIII.

They're much too firm on fame's immortal ladder,
Where constant larks hymn matins in the sky,
For any man with dried beans in a bladder
To scare them from their high-blown destiny;
And I would shrink, as from an asp or adder,
Ere aught of mine should their true fame decry;
Hence, should they see, they'll pardon this digression
As but a special puff—and no transgression.

IX.

I here might make a very pretty plea

To prove my style of writing is the true one;
Yet critics of the commonest degree

Will aptly tell you it is not a new one;
And virgins of the purest taste will see

Some passages reminding them of "Juan";
Even Willis, Halleck, Saxe, and bards I tire on,
Have thought worth while to imitate Lord Byron.

X.

I've faith in Bulwer — and 't was he that said

True genius grew from reading ripe productions;
To cram your mental stomach with such bread
As wholesome authors furnish, your eruptions
Would be a new life founded on the dead;

Hence — he proceeds with logical deductions —
What you thus spout, or write, for state or nation
Will prove you've genius, taste, and cultivation.

XI.

Howe'er that be I will not pause to prate,

But draw the inference which my conscience eases,
And yield to what the Solons please to state;

I use, as new, whate'er my fancy seizes,
Though it should be of pre-Adamic date,

When worlds and thoughts were floating round in
pieces!

For thus by patching wornout, old formality,
My fig-leaf garb becomes originality!

XII.

Our dearest pleasure and our direst pain
Is our first dream of pure and holy love ;
That joy, once lost, will never come again —
So like the bliss we hope to gain above ;
O more than blessedness, or more than bane,
The first grand passion that our souls approve ;
Should I tell mine — it was so dire and baleful —
You'd shed me tears, until I had a pailful.

XIII.

I loved, of course, as other mortals do
Who have the weakness which is known as human ;
Outwatched the stars, and inspiration drew
From angel lips — belonging to a woman ;
Made vows and sighed, and played the fool like you,
Or any he that calls himself a true man ;
Wrote odes to eyes and eyebrows — glorious labor —
And lost at once my sweetheart — and my neighbor !

XIV.

'Tis very sad, I grant, to lose your Mary
Just as your heart is brimming o'er with joy ;
And when you hoped to clasp your charming fairy,
Find she's eloped with some outlandish boy —
Or man that's ugly, old and rich and wary —
Whose money buys her as it would a toy ;
The feeling's strange, and difficult to smother —
And life a torment — till you court another.

XV.

I cannot all forget such bygone days

I will confess, though the confession lower me ;
In pleasant groves where nature chants her lays

Life's loving spring-time will again come o'er me ;
Then in my soul once more the feeling preys,

Whilst phantom nymphs float on the breeze before
me.

In such a time my throbbing heart rehearses,

With youthful ardor, something like these verses :

THE MAPLE GROVE.

I.

In memory lives the blessed night

We wandered down the maple grove,
When Luna with her mellow light

Shone sweetly on our plighted love ;
Whilst stars within the azure dim

Grew pale in gazing on our eyes,
And scenes no alien art could limn,
Became our transient paradise.

II.

With arms encircled round thy waist,
Thy head reclining on my breast,

With gentle force and eager haste
My lips to thine were fondly pressed;
What blessed heart-throbs then were ours,
What heavenly rapture — joys divine —
What bliss was born within those bowers,
For thou wast mine — forever mine!

III.

From vine-clad slopes the streamlets trilled
A music on the charmèd air,
As sweet as thy dear voice that filled
The holy night with heavenly prayer;
Lest envious zephyrs unaware,
Should trespass on thy matchless charms,
I stood thy guard, with jealous care,
And clasped thee safe within my arms.

IV.

'T was there, and thus, I told my love,
'T was then we pledged our troth for aye
Beneath that blooming maple grove
Upon a golden night in May;
The stars that gazed upon our eyes,
The moon that looked so pale and lorn,
Were fading in the azure skies
That rounded up that morrow morn.

V.

What weary years have passed away
Since we were wandering side by side


Adown the maple slopes of May
Upon a blessed eventide!
Yet — in my dreams — I clasp thy form
And kiss those melting lips of thine —
Still press thee to my heart as warm,
And revel thus in joys divine.



CANTO V.



I.

 HE best relief for hopeless love is smoking,
A remedy you doubtless think is queer;
In serious matters I 'm averse to joking—
Some loggerheads prefer their lager-beer,
Or gin, or brandy, whilst their passion choking
For one they held the dearest of the dear;
Let all such go to Hades—or to glory!—
I 'll smoke, forget—and then resume my story.

II.

To smoke or not to smoke, that is the question!
If nobler in the mind to let it be
Perhaps you 'll give, by way of a suggestion,
Some other means to cause life's ills to flee:
I "blow my cloud" and prose away in fustian,
With mind at ease, "in maiden fancy free"—
And had I power, my calumet so peaceful
Would ever fume with incense rare and easeful.

III.

I'll not expose the rhyming tricks of trade,
And scorn the wretch that should attempt to do it ;
To poetasters of the lowest grade,
Who simply know enough to make them rue it,
Whose Pegasus is but a sorry jade —
Their muse a bottle, demijohn, or cruet —
To them I leave all wonderful disclosures
And bastard fame, attending such exposures.

IV.

And have you tricks ? some pale-faced plodder utters ;
Go ask the same of all renowned magicians !
A trick that cured Demosthenes of stutters ;
Bread pills are used by eminent physicians
With potent power — when a rich fool mutters,
Or else they'd lose their very best commissions ;
The trick of Common Sense, O, ignoramus !
Is that which made and makes all poets famous.

V.

It comes to that sure test, howe'er you flutter
In high-blown words and introverted phrase ;
And he that has an eye to bread and butter,
Or cares a fig for fame and worldly praise,
Must bear in mind that fact, and strive to utter
Straightforward thoughts in all he sings or says ;
For fuss and fume, and pettifogging fury
But goes for "bunkum" with the public jury.

VI.

This hint is mostly meant for raw beginners,
Yet old and young, and all who write or spout
To listening ears, will find themselves the winners
By leaving their superfluous verbiage out :
Stump-speaking bores that yawp at public dinners,
And breathe contagion over pork and crout,
Are bad examples of mixed drinks and dishes —
Of broken metaphors — and loaves and fishes.

VII.

I'll take my place among the rhyming tribe,
If some good friend will steal my verse and print it ;
Pope's letters found the light by means of bribe
To have them stolen — but I need but hint it !
I care not for the hungry critics' gibe,
If some kind publisher will be my Lintot —
Having no fears of dusty shelves, where crumble
Moth-eaten musings, writ by rhymers humble !

VIII.

And, by the by, how oft a dedication
Redeems a book that else had died at birth,
By tacking it to one whose name and station
Would make it read, regardless of its worth ;
But I have no such thought in contemplation,
As mine will reach to every home and hearth —
Or if I had — and I were *compos mentis* —
I would select as sponsor George D. Prentice.

IX.

The why and wherefore should you wish to know
I might decline the subject to pursue ;
But on the stream of time whose ebb and flow
Reveals the false and sometimes hides the true,
No change of time or tide to me can show
A firmer friend, among the steadfast few ;
His noble manhood snatched me from the wave
Where breakers lurked that groaned to be my grave.

X.

'T is time some writer raised the very devil
To drive our Authors from the beaten road ;
To force them from their present low, dead level,
And prick them onward with a sharpened goad ;
They 're growing rusty with too long a revel,
And much too lazy for an epic load ;
They smoke and drink and gormandize and molder,
Nor dream the world is wiser grown, and older.

XI.

I greatly lack the necessary gall
To give such renegades a proper lashing ;
My "milk of human kindness" flows for all —
Good, bad, indifferent — e'en those whom thrashing
Would make better ; 't would fearfully appall
My gentle nature to see critics hashing,
As they deserve, the idle men of letters
Who hold the place of those who are their betters.

XII.

Some few monopolize the "Central track"—

The only land route leading on to fame—

And though their steam is low and motion slack,

They puff and snort and wheeze along the same ;

And should your Iron horse speed at their back,

The track is theirs—to keep it is their game !

You cry, "Switch off!" or whistle with derision—

And wreck both trains by coming in collision.

XIII.

Hence I avoid their track, and let them sleep,

And store my wares within a quiet Argo

In watchful guise, lest treacherous spies should creep

And lurk and filch from out my wealthy cargo

Before I sail upon the public deep—

Ere myrmidons of theirs lay vile embargo ;

But when my anchor's up and fameward steering,

I'll bid defiance to their buccaneering !

XIV.

Meantime I must return and talk of self,

A subject grateful to my elocution !

I'm more than common clay among the delf—

A Queen's-ware stamp from my own institution ;

No gold can buy who scorns the power of pelf—

No siren voice can change my resolution,

Whate'er it may be—and self-condemnation

Can have no place in this most true narration !

XV.

I've hinted that I turned my hand to art,
And dabbled much with pencils and with colors;
Pored on Old Masters, studied rules by heart,
Grew pale and thin and wore Byronic collars;
Had much to do with a chromatic chart,
And blasphemed slightly at the use of Mullers;
But found at length — like Turner-headed Ruskin —
I had more talent for the sock and buskin!

XVI.

My wayward genius has a varied range,
Like that of one who is a Patent-factor,
And in the course of things 't would not be strange
If I became a "Star," or first-class Actor;
My muse rejoices at a ceaseless change —
Success or failure never can distract her;
She would "prove all things" — see St. Paul's epistle —
Though forced from beds of down to beds of thistle.

XVII.

I have a "mission" of some kind, I know —
At least this thought will give me consolation,
Though all my gifts should prove a passing show —
And I should fail to win some approbation.
I'd try my fame in prose, but fear the blow
Of critics, whom I hold in estimation!
As my success is much dependent on it,
I'll bribe Reviewers with a prosy Sonnet.

A CRUMB FOR CRITICS.

O CRITIC, crush not this my shell and meat
Beneath thy crunching, careless, pathworn feet,
Without one careful step to separate
The shell and meat from an untoward fate ;—
For know, who diets from thy board and plate
Will turn a demon, if but fed on hate,
And like the snake the woodman warmed and fed,
May fang the hand that gives but poisoned bread.
This once vouchsafe a high and manly aid,
And rise superior to thy “dreadful trade :”
To spy out chaff let others meanly strive —
Do thou seek grains and nobly bid them live ;
Thus prove, the highest reach of Critic Art
Is that which nurtures love within the heart !

XVIII.

I've tried my hand at portraiture and find
I have some skill in painting pretty faces ;
I would have been a Singer — if born blind —
Or Ivory black, like “Negro minstrel” races !
I've thought of Bonner — and I have a mind
To try some Ledger-lines in “pleasant places” ;
And on the whole I'd make a slashing Editor —
If some good friend would go my bail as creditor.

XIX.

And yet perhaps I'm wrong in holding views
That may turn out quite foreign to the matter;
Still they may answer as a sort of ruse

To lead astray those critics who would flatter
My true pretension to the Epic muse —

And hide the fact that I'm disposed to chatter!
I'll give my life, I guess, to ease and pleasure —
And laugh at all things, without stint or measure!

LAUGHTER.

I.

LET me exult in a tumult of joy!

Blame not my spirit for chanting a tune
Wild as the notes of a frolicsome boy —

Sweet as the musical matins of June!

Nothing in nature should make a man sad,

She laughs aloud in her thunder and rain;

Earthquake and tempest resound, she is glad —

Shaking the cobwebs of care from her brain!

II.

Chirruping crickets that haunt the old hearth;

Pewees and sparrows that nest in the eaves;

Bird, beast, and insect all over the earth,

Laugh at the lubberly fellow that grieves!

Sunshine laughs out in the gay forest trees;
Shadows are laughing and dancing below;
Meadows are joyous with honey-fed bees —
Fools, only, whine at the phantom of woe.

III.


Hail is but laughter that tickles the side
Of old mother earth in her winter of sleep;
Snow is a blanket of laughter spread wide,
To cover earth's fun in a jollified heap:
Stars laugh and wink at each other on high —
Fun finds a place in those far away clods! —
Thunder that carols all over the sky —
Nothing at all but the laughter of gods!



CANTO VI.



I.

 HIS world is all a stage," — so Shakspeare
says, —

"And all the men and women merely players,"
Who take new parts, "assume" some virtuous ways,
And make their exit after saying prayers ;
Their rôle well played, begets a proper praise

When they have shuffled off their coil of cares :
Death ends the play, and Time drops down the curtain,
Which leaves their future fate somewhat uncertain.

II.

I have a taste for Art, I know and grant,
But somehow lack the energy and vigor
To cope with rascals who pretend to cant
About the size of brain and proper figure
Essential to success : as if to plant

Dry rules like seed, you 'd raise an artist bigger
In point of fame — not size — than West or Titian !
I found, like Hazlitt, Art was not my mission.

III.

My judgment over-reached my skill of hand ;
My taste's refinement overawed my skill ;
My mind made pictures lovely, lofty, grand,
Beyond the expression of my utmost will ;
All Nature teemed with beauty — air, sea, land —
Hill, mountain, vale, rock, ruin, river, rill :
Scarred walls were covered with designs and prints —
My thoughts were pictures, and I lived in tints.

IV.

O days and nights, thank God, forever fled !
When I had hopes of greatness *in futuro* ;
When my sad heart and ever-aching head
Were filled with dreams of colors and *oscuro* ;
When brightest tints weighed heavier than lead,
And I was crammed, like drawers of bureau,
With drapery hints and prints and scraps and sketches,
Until I envied slaves as happy wretches !

V.

Yet Hazlitt sings of pleasures painters know
With so much pathos, you almost believe him ;
If *pain* is *pleasure*, then it goes to show
A man is happiest when you 're sure to grieve him ;
Yet I 'll not linger here to "pick a crow"
With one who was no Artist — God relieve him !
He tried to paint and failed — then took to writing,
Lived, loved, and lectured, starved, and died inditing.

VI.

It may be possible I 'll follow suit,
And do as Hazlitt did some time before me ;
If my first grafting bear but bitter fruit
I 'll try again, though every critic score me ;
My trunk of life has got too deep a root
To let a drouth — or rather failure — bore me :
Whilst sunshine warms and dews distil their blessing,
New fruit may ripen beyond hope or guessing.

VII.

But I 'll not moralize on chance or fate,
Such matter best becomes the Priest and Preacher ;
My day of grace is not quite out of date,
I too may turn a Lecturer and Teacher, —
As poets and great prosers have of late —
And “lads in black,” too, witness Parson Beecher ;
But what I may do in my generation
I 'm sure of one thing — public approbation !

VIII.

This world has souls so oversoiled with clay
That men of genius have no chance to rest here ;
The motley mob I mentioned t' other day,
Who smear you with their filthy, muddy vesture ;
“The great unwashed” that, jury-like, array
Themselves as censors of each act and gesture
Of all who rise above their vulgar standard —
And hence from Pope to Poe they 're vilely slandered :

IX.

For if they fail to see you by the light
That emanates from their low taper stand point,
They 'll drag you down — whatever be your height —
Until you touch some portion of their land point,
When they, like bats and owls, will gorge their sight,
And dimly dream they have attained the grand point
Of proving you but worth their vile reproaches,
Should you disdain their diet — mice and roaches.

X.

Like men of genius, I have grown erratic
And dwell above the common herd of clay,
Where I sketch wit, with charcoal, in my attic,
And paint on *high-art* pictures every day;
That is, when I 'm not bilious and rheumatic,
Or smoking pipes and reading some old play:
In my sky-parlor, with its cobweb splendor,
I nurture fancies wild and sweet and tender.

XI.

Thus in high state above all earth-born jars,
In my own style I live in peace and quiet,
And find companionship with moon and stars —
Or thunder-storms, when all the clouds run riot;
Here I record life's trophies and its scars,
And praise my valor and partake my diet:
No mortal mars my peaceful habitation,
Or makes afraid my notes of admiration!

XII.

I love mankind, and doubtless they love me,
Yet I must say, "Hands off!" in this connection!
You close my skylight when you crowd to see
The sources of my Art and Heart affection,
From whence are drawn, with pencil full and free,
The songs and paintings in this "rare collection";
And — once for all — I tell you sure and certain,
You shall not come behind my high-art curtain!

XIII.

I've closed my doors and built my barricade,
And mounted guns *en barbette* on my castle;
Laid in provisions — all my chances weighed
For a life siege in this my private bastile;
And should a foe break through — "Off with his head!"
So much for bucking up 'gainst paint and pastel!
With pen, or pencil, all such foes are slaughtered;
I show no quarter, till they 're "drawn and quartered!"

XIV.

Hands off, I say; I must be left alone;
'Tis distance makes your friendship sweet and pleasant;
In my own attic let me gnaw my bone,
And growl or chuckle over fish or pheasant;
No spies shall lurk about my sacred throne
To note if I eat food like prince or peasant;
Give room, I say — fall back to your low basement —
Or, by the Lord, I'll fling you from my casement!

XV.

Regardless of expense, 't was Cowper "O'd"

For "lodges," "wilderness," and boundless umbra;
My sylvan muse prefers another road

Less filled with undergrowth and uncut lumber;
A "desert" Byron wished for his abode —

And Pope a "grot" — for fancy's magic slumber;
I'd have a wood all fringed with brook and meadow,
The which I'll sketch in dreamy light and shadow.

NATURE'S HOLIDAY.

I.

I STOLE away into the wood;
I wandered on in silence far;
And sought in nature's solitude
To soothe the din of daily war;
I sought the simple and the good
Which human fiends can never mar.

II.

The silence touched my inner life,
I knew of Heaven — I felt a God;
Peace bloomed and lowly flowers were rife
With blessings where my footsteps trod;
No savage, with avenging knife,
Ruled here with his imperious nod.

III.

At home with Nature's quiet heart,
I grew in love with simple things,
And treasured in the groves apart
A wealth unknown to haughty kings;
Where songs were sung, with artless art,
By happy birds on golden wings.

IV.

These are the Poets — said I then —
The singers of immortal song,
That purify the souls of men
From haunting sin and human wrong;
That melt our souls to rapture, when
Love-laden lays to them belong.

V.

Thus wandering from the haunts of woe,
With nature's music in my heart,
I felt a glad and glorious glow
Which banished every cruel smart
That sentient souls are forced to know
Ere they enjoy the better part.

VI.

The bliss I found was all serene;
My joys were open as the day;
In flowery shade, or meadows green,
My vagrant fancies madly play,
With fervent faith this fairy scene
Were human nature's holiday.

CANTO VII.



I.



HAVE forgot in this, my rambling style,
To paint my full-length portrait for the ladies,
Whose frowns are fatal — but whose magic
smile

Could win a red-hot soul from out of Hades!
For, in this age, Eve's daughters can beguile
Old Nick himself. You'll find at Mr. Brady's
The "head and front" of him who has offended,
Done up in colors rich and rare and splendid!

II.

I mean no slur, but simply wish to make
My protest here 'gainst art abominations;
Sign-painter pictures which the rabble take
For high-art gems, or perfect imitations:
And photographic daubs, that make one ache
To throttle fools, who yield them admirations;
In time to come such trash will but encumber
A useful garret — stored with useless lumber.

III.

I've heard much said by those who go from home,
About their desolation in a city
Where all were strangers; now I'd rather roam
An unknown integer among the witty,
Where human streams are wont to froth and foam,
Than plead or plod with men as wise as Chitty;
I'm then myself, in unit or expansion —
My soul returns into its proper mansion.

IV.

'Tis then I strive to make the just amends
I owe myself for all life's weary labor;
And with my "fighting soul" once more make friends,
Shake hands and kiss and play the proper neighbor;
Then frowning fate with blushing beauty bends,
And discords change to music like the tabor —
Or other sounds that set the brain to reeling
With human love and heart-warm human feeling.

V.

"The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law" —
A text you'll find in Romeo or Hamlet;
And 't would be right, if, acting on this saw,
All men in buckram, or in cloaks of camlet,
Would wisely seek the true import to draw —
And bind unto their souls this precious am'let —
A man's best friend is self; 't is true that no man
Need fear a foe — if self be not the foeman.

VI.

And good or bad, we must come home at last
To proper self, and throw the thongs aside
That bound our unfledged reason in the past;
Religion, laws, our politics and pride,
And all our teachers taught of grand and vast—
And that, too, which they sought in vain to hide;
When childhood ceases and the man begins
We must crawl forth, as reptiles shed their skins.

VII.

And some are reptiles to the bitter end,
That leave their slime upon the tree of life:
Who squirm and cringe and twist and smirk and bend
As low-born sycophants, with venom rife;
In whom all vile and meaner passions blend;
Who sneak and fawn and whine and stir up strife;
Foul blots on Nature's fair and shining face—
The spawn and offal of the human race.

VIII.

Our boyhood over, we must think as men,
And don the armor for life's sanguine fray;
No parent-guides point out our pathway when
Life's stormy battle blazes on our way;
That time of ease will never come again
Which blest us in youth's rosy holiday;
O fearful time, when joining in life's quarrel
We die ignobly—or win crowns of laurel!

IX.

If I had time I'd chant a passing stave
'Bout straying streams and waterfalls and fountains ;
Of Alps and thunder-storms, like Byron, rave —
Or savage hordes in our own Rocky Mountains ;
Of bones and wrecks beneath the briny wave,
And caves of coral, past a mortal's countings ;
Of trees, whose towering tops and arms upreaching
In skyward space, to heaven are ever preaching !

X.

And I might prate of blooms whose shape and hue,
And odors rare the god of love would sicken ;
Might paint in language, beautiful and true,
Bright Eden vales, that have no thorns to prick in ;
Where Eves and Adams — just as good as new —
By nameless ills had never yet been stricken ;
Might sing of all things lovely, sweet, or tender,
Until my pages shone with regal splendor !

XI.

But I will leave to other bards such lays —
Whose lives, at best, are but a feverish scramble ;
I'm in no hurry for immortal bays,
And rather choose my Pegasus should amble
On vine-clad slopes and blössom-shaded ways —
Where peasants toil and lambkins frisk and gambol.
This Canto's but the Prologue of my story —
Or "starting point" on the race-course of glory !

LOST YOUTH.

I.

A STRAIN, like songs of dying swans ;
A fragment of forgotten rhyme ;
A vision of the ghostly dawns
That woke me in life's early prime
To hopeless love and cruel scorns,
And thoughts of unforgiven crime :

II.

Thus come the memories of the past,
With faded light and smothered joys .
With daring hopes, too bright to last,
With peals of fame — now empty noise, —
With high aspirings, grand and vast,
My hopeless soul no more enjoys.

III.

Like Indian Summer's azure air,
And music heard in holy dreams ;
Like voices lost in silent prayer,
And murmurings of distant streams,
Come back those days, when life was fair,
With muffled sounds and hazy gleams.

IV.


Within my soul the memory preys ;
My lost youth was a dream of fame ;
Those half-forgotten, wildering days,
When I, too, sought to win a name,
Give but the phantom sounds of praise,
The knell of what I fain would claim.



CANTO VIII.



I.

 ITALY, I've had my dream of thee!
'T was but a dream of my imagination;
Thy classic hills and vales I ne'er may see,
And all the works of thy great minds' creation;
O for the golden days when Rome was free —
The home of Art and Artists that no nation
May ever rival, till the earth and ocean
Have ceased to roll in their eternal motion.

II.

How often on the sunny slopes of home,
With dreamful eyes I've seen thy noontide glories;
Whilst poring on some dear and ancient tome,
O'erwrit with art and grand poetic stories;
Breathed inspiration 'neath St. Peter's dome,
Ere Goths and Vandals made their fearful forays;
Aye, dreamed of thee before thy desolation —
When thou wast Queen and ruler of creation.

III.

Alas, that dream of happiness is o'er —

Those high ambitious hopes have fled forever ;
The spring of life returns, O, nevermore! —

Still onward flows the sparkling rill and river ;
I might have crossed the ocean's starry floor —

I might have been — what I can now be never :
Well, be it so : Cain killed his brother Abel
Else he had been — pray who will tell the fable ?

IV.

What heartaches linger in this *might have been* !

What choking sighs and tears and tribulation ;
The precious time can never come again

That blest life's morning with true inspiration,
And buoyed our hearts through stormy years of pain ;

Our blighted souls admit no consolation
When on the tide of time our bark is stranded —
And shipwreck comes where all our hopes were landed.

V.

I might have dwelt in antique marble halls,

And made bad copies of the ancient Masters ;
With "desperate charcoal, round my darkened walls,"

I might have outlined groups of Paris-plasters ;
With Dantic power, have writ some "dying falls" —

And yet was saved from all such dire disasters
By lack of dross, material aid, and shekels,
Those helps to genius — Fortune's golden freckles !

VI.

O, go to Rome, ye simple and ye wise,
And glut your souls with Satans, Saints, Madonnas;
With outlines grand, and colors, feast your eyes —
On Raphaels, Angelos, or Don Giovanni's;
Then with fine frenzy paint a peerless prize,
Whose charms will equal Venus' or Susannah's;
And the Art-world will chant your tuneful praises —
When you are food for worms, and nourish daisies!

VII.

But do not lose your independent soul
And bow your knee in humble adoration
Until your genius flies its proper goal,
And leaves you but a mass of self-prostration,
Without a feature of your native rôle,
Which stamped with Nature your own Art-creation;
Vile imitations of old imitators
May make good daubers, but bad Art-translators.

VIII.

And what you do, however great or small,
Still let it grow, as 't were, from your own dung-hill;
What Nature plants you 'll find original —
Then nurse the same, and do not toil and bungle
To gather figs from thorns, or sweets from gall;
Be self-intact, or you 'll become a mongrel;
Or at the best, a patchwork dead mortality,
Without one spark of true originality.

IX.

Imbue your soul at will ; catch inspiration,
And gird your loins and nerve your arm with force ;
Avoid, as death, all flattering self-inflation,
And you may grow in greatness till, of course,
The world will see, and yield your proper station
And sound your praise till Fame herself grows hoarse !
Though many fail, a few grow surely famous,
Thus fame or infamy at length must claim us.

X.

The world, too, is a gallery of art
Where Nature paints with mighty undulations ;
Her "winding lines" are found on every chart,
Her magic colors blend in all the nations ;
Her mountains grand — each variegated part
Of hill and dale — are rife with inspirations ;
Her canvas shows the Moon and Sun-tide splendor
With vivid touches words must fail to render.

XI.

Yes, go to Rome and feast your morbid fill
On Painting, Sculpture — kindred Architecture ;
Adore, exult, admire, and worship till
Your spirit grasps the vast instructive lecture ;
To Paris, Florence, London — where you will ;
Then bow to Nature as the great corrector !
Of all High Art, the highest reach and feature
Is that which brings the subject home to Nature.

XII.

She walked with Raphael as a bosom-friend;
His great high Priestess, mistress, guide, and teacher;
'T was she whose genius taught Lorraine to blend
Those sunset gleams no other human creature
May ever match, whilst skies with glory bend:
Her love made Titian much the highest reacher
In magic tints — voluptuous forms enhancing
With glowing graces — evermore entrancing.

XIII.

She dips her pencil in the sunset dyes,
And paints the grandeur of departing glories;
With Rembrandt skill she limns the midnight skies,
With Guido power portrays the bright Auroras;
With savage grandeur — when tornadoes rise —
Salvator-like, she dashes colors o'er us
With lightning strokes, all blent with clouds and
thunder,
Which fills the soul with thrilling awe and wonder.

XIV.

She paints volcanoes, and her pencil dips
In azure tints of cool and distant mountains;
The spoil of Earthquakes, and the dread Eclipse —
The liquid lights of waterfalls and fountains;
With dewy freshness tints angelic lips,
And limns all graces beyond Art-surmountings;
Of all great painters she has been the boldest —
Of all Old Masters she remains — the oldest!

THE SOUL'S HERMITAGE.

I.

I HAVE a hermitage of common clay,
Wherein are treasures neither rich nor rare,
Yet sacred relics to my life are they,
And hoarded up in secret caskets there.

II.

My pilgrim soul resides there all alone ;
Its weary years of wild unrest are o'er ;
Now soiled and travel-worn from many a zone,
And vain researches on the sea and shore.

III.

No prying eyes look through the portal there ;
No shameless pleasure tempts the soul within ;
Despair without, must still remain despair, —
I have no room for any pleading sin.

IV.

In dim past shadows of a distant morn
I still can see the budding of my years ;
Still hear my hopeful sighs or songs forlorn,
Still see the rainbow in life's morning tears.

V.

Within this hermitage my sleepless soul
Lives o'er again the stormy years of life,
And nerves itself for that eternal goal
Where puny man ends all his petty strife ;

VI.

Lives o'er again the wild enchanting prime
That played with royal gladness through my brain,
And swept with dire alarms, or thrills sublime,
The diapason of all joy and pain.

VII.

I entertain no stranger unaware
Within my soul's most secret solitude,
No guest but Death may claim an entrance there,
No Vandal foot shall ever dare intrude.

VIII.

No one can share in all my bliss or woe,
No eye may see my rapture or despair ;
On beggar palms no alms can I bestow
Of sacred relics, or of treasures rare.

IX.

My house of clay stands midway on a slope,
Oblivion's stream meanders at its base ;
Upon the summit of this mount of hope
The sons of Fame have found a dwelling-place.

X.

I ne'er may write my name upon their scroll,
Or see the glories of their temple fair,
Yet I can hear those thund'rous voices roll
Their godlike anthems through the echoing air.

XI.

I can o'erlook the world a little way,
See isles of palm and blooms forever sweet;
Behold the rising of the orient day,
And sing low murmurs in my safe retreat.


XII.

O blessed midland of my soul's domain,
Secure retreat from envy, hate, and scorn,
Here let me close my simple hermit reign,
And rest in quiet till the coming morn.



CANTO IX.

I.

 LEFT myself some stanzas back or so,
And went prospecting, like a desperate
miner,

In search of golden thoughts and finding woe,
Without the aid of Seer or Diviner;
Men sometimes kiss the rod but curse the blow:—
Even hope deferred may prove a true refiner,
And though despair, with crowning ills importune,
You strike a vein that leads you on to fortune.

II.

Our ills, 't is said, are blessings in disguise:
I've had my share, and still await the blessing;
Life's lottery yet may hold for me a prize
Much greater than I have the skill of guessing;
Though Fortune's blind, there may be Argus eyes
That see but good in all that is distressing;
Misfortune now is my distinctive feature,
And all life's ills seem centred in my nature.

III.

In midst of life we're in the midst of debt —
Or death — which, after all, would be much better;
For, of all mundane ills, not one can fret
So much as that which stains our name as debtor;
When duns assail, or constables beset,
Our very virtues help to forge the fetter
Which binds each independent thought and action,
Until our manhood yields to base detraction.

IV.

And he that holds your "bond" may be a Jew —
A heartless Shylock, bent on filthy lucre,
Or "pound of flesh," to satisfy his due;
With bloodhound howl that well might scare a true
cur,
He snuffs your course and all your steps pursue:
At home, abroad, when hiding in some nook, or
Whilst in the very act of self-suspension,
His *habeas corpus* frustrates your intention!

V.

Here let me give a piece of sage advice
To those who wish to shun the worst of evils, —
I speak with feeling, for I know the price
It costs to exorcise those dunning devils! —
Pay as you go, though 't were a twofold price,
And thus escape the fangs of law, and cavils;
For insolence of duns, to worth and merit,
In time o'ercrows and breaks the proudest spirit.

VI.

O my prophetic soul! my "Uncle Sam!"

You shed your wealth, as autumn trees their leaves;
Then wherefore not my empty pockets cram,

And store my coffers with your golden sheaves?

Your "mint drops" are a universal balm

For impecunious woes, (and traitor thieves!)

O Uncle Sam, I've labored, and I wait, —

Roll out your "roleaus" and pass round your "plate"!

VII.

'T is the first time, O relative of mine,

That I have asked a stiver from your store;

So "do the handsome," and your fame shall shine

In "blue and gold," for maidens to adore;

I'll make it live along my lightning line,

In thundering words new-coined from virgin lore;

And do such deeds as passeth comprehension —

If you will book me for a life-long pension!

VIII.

This world is but a Congress Hall, at best,

Where each man struggles to enlist the "Speaker";

My turn will come to spout among the rest

With zeal becoming to a "freedom shrieker"!

I'll have my say of North, South, East, and West,

And toast my valor, from my private beaker, —

Until I too am certain our great Nation

Owes me a lasting debt for her salvation!

IX.

The game of life is but a game of "bluff,"

And 't is not he who wins that holds the Aces :
Kings, Queens, and Knaves are just the proper stuff

To "rake the pile" before our anxious faces ;
The men who win are always "up to snuff,"

And care but little for the world's grimaces.
(To "fight the Tiger" is a game still harder
Than "losing stakes" with a cool, cut-throat "carder" !)

X.

Though you should risk the guillotine or pulley,

Play out life's play, ye simple and ye wise,
With Cato nerve and self-esteem like Tully ;

Care not for means so ye secure the prize ;
Beg, brag, and boast, — bet, bluff, browbeat, and bully ;

"Put money in your purse," and open flies
All doors — save one: true love your sordid booty
Can never purchase — though you buy the beauty.

UNDER THE ROSE.

I.

UNDER the rose my love and me

Kissed away life's morning hours ;

Under the rose — our trysting tree —

In youth's celestial bowers.

II.

Under the rose, in life's fair morn,
Vows we made when lips were sweet;
We knew no cares nor hopes forlorn
That after-years repeat.

III.

Under the rose at summer noon;
Under the rose of starlit skies;
Under the rose when harvest's moon
Looked down on our paradise.

IV.

O, our lives were beautiful then!
Girls were fair and boys were brave;
Themes we talked in the grove and glen
A world of sinners might save.

V.

All the seasons were then the same;
Blight or bloom marred not our bliss;
Hopes of Heaven, or dreams of fame,
Were nothing to virtue's kiss.

VI.

Birds sang sweet, and flowers grew fair;
Odors breathed from Eden vales;
All that was bright and good and rare
Of loveliest things, told tales.

VII.

She has gone to her home above,
Gone in her beauty and truth;
She has gone to the realms of love
In the spring-time of her youth.

VIII.

Time is doing its work for me;
Flowers bloom above her sod;
Under the rose—our trysting tree—
Her soul went up to her God.

IX.

Life is losing all charms for me;
The friends of my youth have fled;
Once I loved,—now the trysting tree
Shadows the beautiful dead.

X.

All the songs I ever have sung,
The angel faces I paint,—
The music came from her sweet tongue,
The pictures from that dear saint.


XI.

Under the rose, in a lovely clime,
Violets grow on her grave;
Mingle my dust with hers in time,
Is the only wish I crave.

CANTO X.



I.

 WALK the world in quiet and alone,
A pilgrim plodder to the shores eternal;
And though unknowing and alike unknown,
I'm not a Cynic — and have joys diurnal;
If I have cause, I scorn to moan and groan
In misanthropic guise, dire and infernal.
I hold the gift of life's not worth receiving,
If spent in dastard wailing, whines and grieving.

II.

Alone; and yet I am not all alone;
I have my friends in ponderous tomes and pages;
And my heart throbs with gratitude to own
I feel at home with Poets and with Sages;
And though from time and tide my craft be blown,
Whilst their rich argosies sail down the ages,
'T will give my soul a lasting consolation
To own my love for them and adoration.

III.

Whate'er I might, could, would, or should have done,
As Byron sings about some poet-royal,
Is neither here nor there; my race when run
Will prove that I was ever leal and loyal
To all of good and just beneath the sun:

No shameless pleasures — honeyed sins that cloy all —
E'er marred my page of life with degradation,
And left me with remorse for consolation.

IV.

To plod alone along life's rugged road
Is not the proper way a man should travel;
Though Love were all my burden, still the load
Would be much lighter if I could unravel —
You understand? — Within a sort of ode

I will explain — though nameless bigots cavil;
I long have held the matter in advisement —
And publish now this formal advertisement.

WIFE WANTED.

I.

I WANT a wife, — a most uncommon want
When maids and widows are so very plenty;
'T was good advice of Sheridan's, I grant,
Who told his son to take a wife at twenty; —

Ten years to twenty I can safely vaunt; —
“A wife, sir?” said this mad abandoned rake;
“Of course I will! But whose wife shall I take?”

II.

I want a wife to share my woes and joys,
To make a sunshine in my sombre shadows;
Whose very discords were harmonious noise,
Whose smile would make a moorland bloom as
 meadows,
And in the wiling witchery of whose voice
Were sweet enchantment; and whose magic beauty
Would charm my soul with endless love and duty.

III.

I want a wife to lend me sweet repose,
To mend my morals and correct my manners;
To hide my failings and to hate my foes;
To sing quaint ditties and to chant hosannas;
To praise my poems and to spout my prose:
In short, I want a wife in all things loyal,
To be my paragon and princess-royal.

IV.

I want a wife unlike grandmother Eve —
Who will not pluck the sinful fruit forbidden;
Whose scanty drapery would not make one grieve
So much for what was shown as what were hidden;

I want a wife — as you may well believe —
The very pink and essence of perfection,
A model for an Artist — or dissection !

V.

I want no Amazon whose doubtful sex
Were best described as that of neuter-gender ;
Nor one whose antecedents might perplex,
If she descended from the Witch of Endor ;
I want no vixen, my poor soul to vex, —
Nor one I could suspect — nor one suspicious !
Nor old, nor ugly — gaunt nor grim nor vicious.

VI.

I want not one whose vagrant turn of mind
Would lead from nursery cares to legislation ;
She-politicians always leave behind
Those gentle traits that win true adoration ;
The charms and graces which are sure to bind
Our heart-warm love and vows of pure devotion,
Are more becoming to my simple notion.

VII.

I do not want a fool to fashion's whim ;
I do not want an animated painting ;
I want not one too stout, nor yet too slim,
Nor given much to boisterousness nor fainting ;
Not too much levity, nor always grim ;

No sham of hoops and cotton—no ideal,—
I want the perfect, pure, the ripe and real!

VIII.

I'm not a saint—I honestly admit—
Nor yet a Satan,—and, I'm sure, no Joseph;
I have some common sense, a little wit,
And at a pinch can very aptly close off
An argument with a decided hit;
I'm not a Crichton and am no Apollo,—
A statement, doubtless, all my foes will swallow!

IX.

Yet I would have the purest, brightest, best
That ever won a wayward son of Adam;
In whose fair charms my soul were ever blest
With angel raptures—granting that she had 'em:
Thus I would sink to everlasting rest—
My brows encompassed with the fadeless laurel—
And leave my name to point a glorious moral.

V.

I am in earnest—though you all may sneer
At my odd method; the style, though curious,
Contains what all men think, and yet they fear
To be as plain, as honest, and as serious;
You'll say I'm right, howe'er you pout and jeer
And lash my name and fame with language furious;
Meantime I calmly wait my Eve-companion
Beneath my vine and fig-tree—or my banyan.

VI.

In time to come I hope to take my ease

In twilight groves—like pictures done in umber—
With one whose presence will not fail to please;

Who 'll crown my soul in blessings without number:
The heartless world will then no longer tease,

And nameless joys will sweetly haunt my slumber:
No more alone!—But I must to my quarters,
To dream of marble halls and falling waters.

THE NAMELESS ONE.

I.

THE weary years crowd on my sleepless brain;

My watching eyes grow dim to welcome thine;
My heart-fires kindle—and go out again—
Then blaze anew to light me to thy shrine.

II.

On morning slopes I've sought thy blooming charms,
And down the vales where amorous streamlets stray;
With eager haste have sped through twilight farms
Where thy dear phantom fled my steps away.

III.

In sunset lands I've heard thy wooing voice

Breathe low sweet music in enchanted bowers,
Where listening nature swooned with blissful joys,
And life stood still through all the dreamy hours.

IV.

My dreams pursue thee through the night of years,
Thy vision haunts the flying feet of day;
I strive in vain to see thee through my tears,
Yet feel thy presence near my soul always.

V.

O'er toilsome moors and dreary fields of space,
Beneath the stars, or in the light of morn,
I've sought to clasp thee to my soul's embrace,
Yet vain all searching—hopeless and forlorn.

VI.

Then come to me, O partner of my life!
My better self—my soul-enchancing bride;
Dawn on my gloom—dispel my clouds of strife
With love's warm rays, O pure and sanctified.

VII.

My arm will shield thee and my heart will bless;
My songs of hope will echo sweet with thine;
Attune all discords unto loveliness
And dreamlike music from life's holy shrine.

VIII.

If thy lone spirit, weary with delay,
Has fled beyond the reach of mortal eyes,
How shall I know thee when I pass away,
O whither search, in all the boundless skies?

IX.

O linger not, my lovely one, mine own ;

My pilgrim soul is lost through all the years,
And blindly kneels at some forsaken throne
To wait thy coming and to hide its tears.

X.

I dare not think thy soul would pass away

Ere it had blessed me in its mortal guise ;
Nor will I dream, what Angels seem to say —
Thy spirit-bride awaits in Paradise.

XI.

Make haste to bless me, O thou nameless one !


My yearning soul grows gray with grief and tears,
And darkly gropes where graves are thickly strown,
To save thy memory from the wreck of years !



CANTO XI.



I.

 HE hours go by and all the past is dead,
Until some hidden memory stirs the brain,
When fairy forms, that long ago had fled
From human woes, awake to life again ;
Now nameless phantoms, hovering round my bed,
Renew once more the links in being's chain ;
And youthful loves, like spring-time flowers, arise,
Till earth again becomes a Paradise.

II.

And low sweet sounds — the echoes of lost joys ;
And angel faces — fresh from Eden skies ;
And last farewells — from mad, ambitious boys,
Who gazed out life with hunger-staring eyes, —
Such spells as these my waking trance employs,
Such haunting dreams my sleeping hours still prize ;
Till all the past — its pleasure and its pain —
In strange, sweet sadness, visits me again.

III.

O I would lose my life in wild, sweet dreams,
And never wake within the light of day
To sounds discordant and the garish gleams
That lure the hopeless on the downward way!
In shady vales, by cool sequestered streams,
Where untaught songsters pipe their artless lay,—
With blue-eyed violets, from the fragrant sod,—
In tearful praises, breathe out life to God!

IV.

“Our little lives are rounded with a sleep,”
And what we do but fitful dreams at best;
Our mad ambitions and despairings deep,
Our tempest-passions and our peaceful rest,
All vain desires that soar aloft or creep —
Consuming cares and aspirations blest —
Embrace life's little all of joy and pain:
And we return to silent dust again.

V.

Then friends and foes will soon forget that we
E'er sunned our souls beneath the eye of day,
Or cooled our muse on mountain thoughts, where be
Some frozen hopes that may not thaw away:
They will forget that such as you or me
E'er cast a shadow from our garb of clay;
The night of death will blot our every trace,
And worse, or better, men will take our place.

VI.

Still gentle Spring will deck the earth with flowers,
And larks will hymn their matins in the sky;
Fond lovers whisper in the summer bowers,
And priests will pray and demagogues will lie;
And plodding pilgrims shelter seek from showers;—
Things will go on as usual when we die!
Some “hired mourners” then may dress in weeds,
And joyful heirs proclaim—our evil deeds.

VII.

But let that pass. My thoughts are with the dead;
I smile, or mourn—to know my life is left.
O what is Time, when every hope has fled
From the sad heart, of all but life bereft?
And what is Life, since Time’s keen scythe has cleft
The fairest flowers that ever bloomed or bled?
And what is Earth? A charnel-house of graves!
Mankind? Saints, sinners, savages, and slaves!

VIII.

Time, like a shuttle, gliding to and fro,
In this our warp of life its woof is leaving;
The past and present still must come and go
With smiles and tears, with rapture and with grieving.
And thus the mind, whilst passing swift or slow,
Makes up the fabric which the soul is weaving;
And even dreams, in this our life’s strange mission,
Are wrought of pictures;—I’ll rehearse a vision.

LILY.—A VISION.

I.

IN sleep we die, yet live in dreams,—
A life in death most heavenly rare.
I slept,—and sleeping more than seems
My waking life; for, standing there
I saw a form divinely fair.

II.

Dark tresses clung about her neck
In such a captivating guise
As would have made another wreck
Of Adam and his Paradise;
But saving grace was in her eyes.

III.

No Venus, rising from the sea,
By an immortal pencil limned,
Could show such loveliness as she;
All praise that Poets ever hymned,
Her virgin purity had dimmed.

IV.

The peach-bloom blushed upon her cheek,
The lily paléd upon her breast,
The love-light shone from eyes as meek
As ever soothed a soul's unrest;
I blest her as my angel guest.

V.

My spirit blessed her — not my voice ; —
I feared that words would mar the spell,
And trembled lest some alien noise
Should ring that radiant vision's knell,
And break my heart with its farewell.

VI.

She stood, with eager lips apart,
Like one who listens for the sound
That echoes music in the heart —
Or stabs with discord's cureless wound —
When all is lost, or joy is crowned.

VII.

O sleeping joy ! O waking woe !
It was my Lily's form divine,
The loved and lost of long ago ;
But now, in dreams, forever mine —
The Angel of my spirit's shrine.

VIII.

I clasped her to my throbbing heart ;
We spoke, as lovers only speak ;
We vowed we nevermore would part,
And sealed the vow on lip and cheek, —
I, and that maiden fair and meek.

IX.

Her form has fled — alas, for aye ;
The vision lives within my brain ;
Till Heaven and Earth shall pass away,
I ne'er may see her like again :
Yet God is good, and Angels reign.



CANTO XII.



I.

BUT to return to my neglected theme :—
Those youthful days when fancy lived in
 clover ;

The halcyon time when young love's fitful dream
Found me from home a hapless, hopeless rover ;
A true Bohemian on life's changeful stream ;
An earnest, honest, mad impassioned lover :
With feelings wild and strange and quite bewilderin',
Such as may happen to the best of children.

II.

O joyous days that never come again !

When bright eyes, rosy lips, and fond caresses
Made life a heartache—filled with pleasing pain !

When raven curls, or golden, sunlit tresses,
And nymphs and naiads bind you in their train ;

When ardent language all in vain expresses
The burning thoughts you struggle to discover,—
With heart brimful of love—and running over !

III.

'T is then the full heart blossoms into song,
And honeyed music melts upon the tongue;
'T is then fond lovers shun the noisy throng
For quiet groves, where tears and sighs are rung
Through all the changes that to love belong;—
Or wander down where blooming vines are hung;
And where no prying eyes may dare intrude
Upon the rapture of their solitude.

IV.

O blessed time, when heart-throbs are in tune
With all that 's pure and holy 'neath the skies!
When tender passions come forth with the moon,
And gentle loves as gently take their rise;
When, lost in sighs, the morning all too soon
With garish light dispels our paradise—
And love flies off, with speedy wings unfurled,
Before the loud, intruding, vulgar world!

V.

O days of bliss, so fleeting and so fair!
Thy memory brings me to my second youth,
And I'm a child again in all but care—
And wear and tear—if I must tell the truth!
But thy young joys make lighter my despair,
And temper all my sternness with sweet ruth;
Thy morning light will gild my evening skies,
Thy spring-time flowers but fade in Paradise.

VI.

Ye nevermore will come, O blessed days,
With nameless thrills and joy-entrancing leisure!
When heart and head ran riot in a maze
Of magic charms, enchanting beyond measure!
When starlike eyes with soft bewildering haze
Melt through the soul at their sweet will and
pleasure;
When earth was but a vale of bliss and kisses,
And hymns were sung, perchance, somewhat like this is.

PHANTOM WOOING.

I.

THE mystic twilight welcomed us amain,
Adown a shady vale of pleasing gloom,
O'erhung with vines and many a fragrant bloom —
Till we were lost in love's delicious pain.

II.

The wayside streamlet sang a vesper near,
In dreamlike cadence to our utterance low, —
A heart-song, gushing with resistless flow
Of rippling music to the eager ear.

III.

The wanton breath of warm voluptuous spring
Encompassed us with a celestial bliss;
Each earnest dalliance seemed a lover's kiss —
With so much fondness did the zephyrs cling.

IV.

Upon this calm and peerless eventide
My lips found language, such as hearts express
When overburdened with love's sweet excess,
That won for me a soul-enchanting bride.

V.

Was it a vision of my wayward brain
That led me down beneath those Eden skies,
With one who made this vale a paradise
Of angel-rapture and Elysian pain?


VI.

Alas! the scene has changed; my fairy bride
Was but a phantom love; the dream is o'er;
The magic spell dissolved forevermore,
Which charmed my soul on that blest eventide.



CANTO XIII.

I.

T length I turned a pioneer of Art,
Although a novice in its varied branches;
And yet I played a not ignoble part
In many towns and villages and ranches;
I found the taste in each and every mart
Almost as good as that of wild Comanches!
Though, on the whole, not worse than I expected
From those whose training had been so neglected.

II.

And, after all, it is but just and fair
To say my crude attempts gave satisfaction
In inverse ratio as their merits were —
That my best paintings won the most detraction!
As gaudy gewgaws make an Indian stare,
So glaring pictures — that would give distraction
To men of taste — among the less enlightened
The blame would be — the colors should be heightened!

III.

This pioneering is not quite the thing
To raise one's standard, or to spur ambition;
And hence it is that I thus say — or sing —
With truth and feeling, Art is not my mission;
I'd rather play a solo on one string —
Or rope — than join another expedition
Whose aim was that of taste and cultivation
Among the backwoods heathen of our Nation!

IV.

And by the backwoods heathen I don't mean
Those sturdy dwellers of the grove or prairie;
Where verdant Nature hints all things in green —
Or savage dells, where hunters should be wary;
For, many cities, where I last have been,
Showed still less taste than regions far more airy;
And private halls and public rooms are found
Where Art is butchered, and where daubs abound.

V.

I've roamed by land and travelled much by water;
Made divers notes, and sundry pencil sketches;
Have seen the place where Minnehaha's daughter
Sought showering shelter from poetic wretches;
Have mused on mountain peaks — or helped to
slaughter,
In shady vales where endless grandeur stretches,
Some harmless deer—bears, buffaloes, and "possums"—
Embalmed in perfumes from magnolia blossoms!

VI.

Have made wry faces on the Mississippi;
Enjoyed the "melting mood" in New Orleans,
Where yellow fever left me somewhat "hyppy,"
A living skeleton beset by "liens."
In zigzag Boston, through a winter "slippy,"
Have chopped cold logic over pork and beans!
In short, I've been a true Bohemian rover,
Yet never got so far as "half-seas-over!"

VII.

For many leagues I've travelled underground,
Where gnomes abide, and such like fabled races,—
In Mammoth caves, where stalactites abound,
And eyeless fish that glaring torch nor day sees;
Where Wonder reigns, and where a lovely sound
Enamored Echoes hold in their embraces!
Have seen the mighty Falls and roaring river
Whose thunder-foam assails the skies forever!

VIII.

I've had some strange mishaps and various ills
That flesh is heir to—and with pill and potion
I have been drugged, until my weekly bills
Flowed in like surges from a troubled ocean;
I've swallowed nostrums, such as cure or kill,
Until my soul was gasping for "promotion":
"Your life or purse!" The Doctor grasped to pluck it—
If Death were pleased that I should "kick the bucket"!

IX.

I have been bit by "big bugs," whose retreat
Might well be shunned by patient Entomologists;
I've bartered "rocks" for vulgar bread and meat
That would enrich the "pack" of wise Geologists;
I have seen "birds" with "feathered nests" complete
That well might puzzle "brooding" Ornithologists;
And met with "beasts" not mentioned in Zoölogy—
That have no fame nor name in Anthropology!

X.

And North and South I travelled up and down;
And East and West—like hapless poor Lord Lovel—
You know the song? Was everywhere "done Browne,"
At cottage, palace, hotel, or a hovel;
At City, Village, wayside Inn, or town,—
And on plantations where the hoe and shovel
By "Uncle Neds" are on the walls suspended—
And Lily-white with Ivory-black is blended!

XI.

I boxed the compass of my native land,
And learned some things worth while a man's forgetting;
Scared simple homelike with my "Antres grand"—
My "idle desarts" had no points for petting;
And having thus, unlike a magic wand,
Swept o'er some space, I thought at length of setting
A good example to my generation,
By holding travel in abomination.

XII.

No more a wanderer. What a change comes o'er
Your feelings on that truly sad occasion
When you return and find a home no more!
That you have lost your dearest, best relation;
No Mother welcomes when you reach the door—
And your own heart is wide with desolation;
I have no power to paint the hopeless feeling—
Perchance 't were better told in sad concealing.

THE RETURN.

I.

THE same blue sky is overhead,
The same rich blooms are at my feet,
But where are they—the silent dead—
Who once gave greetings warm and sweet?
O boyhood joys forever fled!
O friends I nevermore may meet!

II.

The Past returns—where are its joys?
Strange men are calling me by name;
It cannot be they are the boys
That joined me in each social game,
Ere I had sought the empty noise
That fills the thunder-trump of fame.

III.

No more the same ; alas, how changed !

No more a boy — I too grow old ;

All things have now become estranged ;

The past is like a story told

By one whose wits have been deranged

With fancies wild and overbold.

IV.

A strange quick throb is in my heart,

Hot blood mounts upward to my brow ;

From my dim eyes the teardrops start —

The voice of one — long silent now —

Whose music reached beyond all art —

Steals o'er my senses sweet and low :

V.

And I embrace a form of air —

Print kisses on a phantom cheek —

With holy vows and heavenly prayer,

And looks of love that spirits speak ;

O loved and lost — O more than fair !

O anguish idle, vain, and weak.

VI.

Now swallows skim the dusky air ;

Night closes in on hill and dale,

And brings the shadows of despair ;

The stars look down with bliss and bale,


On troubled souls and angels fair —

And Silence reigns o'er all the vale.

CANTO XIV.



I.

 HIS world is one vast Concert Hall of song —
Of Ocean-chantings and of Thunder-psalms;
Orchestral harmonies — discordant wrong —
And whirlwind harpings on the pines and palms;
Immortal hymnings of the sentient throng —
Eternal heart-songs — sweetly soothing calms;
Rejoicing thrills and wailings of despair —
From savage grandeur — to a whispered prayer!

II.

The song of life takes in all shades of sound —
From tempest-passion to the still small voice
That whispers peace — or hisses from the ground;
From warbled melodies of blessed joys
To howling hate, when fiendish foes abound!
From soulful echoes to a hopeless noise —
All sounds — with mingled symphonies arise —
And plead for pardon to the boundless skies.

III.

I've called the world a Gallery of Art,
And so it is. A Congress Hall of Nations;
A Stage, where every actor plays his part;
A Concert Hall, with musical ovations;
A Charnel-house, where Death's destructive dart
Has left the mourners nought but desolations;
The world is all things — full of worth and wonder —
Of wealth and woe — of honest gains and plunder.

IV.

These rambling rhymes, begun in careless mood,
To while away some lonely hours of sorrow,
In course of time may hatch a pretty brood
Of stanzas; that in future I may borrow
To lend a solace to life's solitude,
And smooth the lines that age and care may furrow:
Though, like bad children, they may need correction,
They still will hold a place in my affection.

V.

I do not mean, by this, I am a dupe
To my own failings — nor to beg the question;
I scorn to shuffle — and I will not stoop
To smile my thanks on every fool's suggestion:
No men but cowards need a secret loop
Through which to crawl, when caught in spawning
fustian:
All clever critics will excuse my crudities, —
If any sneer, they will be parvenudities.

VI.

The history of my life is just begun,
And I have left a thousand things unsaid
Of my past self—grave matter and much fun ;
With Episodes on Art, which, rightly weighed,
Might prove a treasure to each father's son,
And give true taste to matron and to maid ;
I could tell things I know—if it were prudent—
Of priceless value to the "High Art" student !

VII.

But it is time to close my evening task
And take my wonted stroll through valleys pleasant ;
Or on the upland slope where sunsets bask,
And fruitful vines beguile the cheerful peasant ;
Some other time—if gentle readers ask—
I may resume my pen. No more at present.
If these few lines should suit your taste and pleasure,
I'll prose again in much the self-same measure.

LIVING DEATH.

I.

OUR lives at best are but a living death ;
The lingering days of pleasure and of pain
Are throbs and pauses of each pulsing breath,
Which come and go, and may not come again :

II.

From youth to age we know but slow decay,
Howe'er we sin, or search for truth and God;
For still Death's angel haunts our devious way,
And treads the path each mortal foot hath trod.

III.

We leave life's spring-time home and all its blooms,
Its Eden glories and Arcadian airs,
And seek in other climes our unknown tombs,
And breathe in other lands our heart-despairs.

IV.

We die to friendships of our early years;
We change in form and mind, in act and speech;
We die to childhood's gush of heart-warm tears,
Unclasping souls that once were each in each.

V.

We die to charms that thrilled through every vein
With heavenly heartaches and foreboding woe;
To eyes, whose beauty fired our soul amain
With blessed raptures none but lovers know.

VI.

We die to forms too fair for earthly mould;
To angel faces bright with paradise;
To soul-felt yearnings pen hath never told,
Or tongue hath uttered underneath the skies.

VII.

We die to hopes of happiness and ease ;
And vain ambitions, maddening once our brain ;
To dreams of fame our souls could never seize —
And then awake to noteless toil again.

VIII.

The orient light that ushered in our birth
With Memnon music or prophetic doom,
Goes down in darkness on our evening hearth,
And drops its pall upon a nameless tomb.

IX.

Thus morning, noon, and night — from year to year —
We fail and fade and gasp for life and breath ;
Until our spirit, bending o'er the bier,
Looks on the closing scene of Living Death.



SONNETS.



DEAL JUSTLY.

I.

LET us deal justly. That which ages know,
And time has stamped as an eternal truth,
Mayhap was doubted in its virgin youth,
And suffered many a critic's trenchant blow.
Law-giving Moses, when from hands Divine
He bore the mandates of the living God —
Who smote all Egypt with avenging rod —
Was chid by Israel's tribe, with peevish whine ;
Then rose his spirit in gigantic rage,
And down from Horeb's mount he strewed his path
With broken marbles — in his holy wrath.
Great thoughts will live, though carping fools should
wage
Unending war against them. In the hem
Of Wisdom's robe lurks many a regal gem.

GOOD IN ALL.

II.

BELIEVE all men are worthier than they seem :
Our first-born feeling and most darling thought
We nurse in secret. Yes, all minds are fraught
With inward beauty by some holy dream.
O who can tell a brother mortal's woes,
His deep affections — hopes embathed in tears —
The earnest longings of his earthly years,
That bless or pain with more than mortal throes ?
The winter-world congeals our warmest trust
And nips the bud of many a virtuous deed —
It tramples life from out the pregnant seed
That needs must perish in ignoble dust.
Bear lightly, world, in thy relentless whirl,
Nor crush a heart that holds a regent pearl.

MANHOOD.

III.

ASSERT yourself and be a man. The thought
Which heaven has planted in your sleepless brain
Nourish with quickening dews, tear-dropping rain
And unremitting toil, till you have brought
A rare exotic from your warmer life.

Did you but wield your intellect aright,
Your name would live among the sons of light—
Not moulder under barren fields of strife.
Rise from your dream and urge your life anew;
Seize on the Angel Time with fierce caressing,
Nor loose your grasp till you obtain a blessing,
And morning-fame breaks on your startled view!
All men are cowards—names that now lie hid
Had else o’ertopped the loftiest pyramid.

TO A POET.

IV.

THOU pale-faced plodder over dead men's lore,
And thought evolver from thy own deep mind,
Within thy quiet life my soul doth find
A Gilead balm for all the ills of yore.
When all the world in deathlike darkness sleeps,
Thy harp asserts a universal sway,
Waking the midnight mind to perfect day,
Whilst idiot Sloth her slumbering vigil keeps.
I too have sought, with agonizing pain,
To write my name among the sons of earth,
As one whose life was not a common birth,
But all my hopeful efforts were in vain:
Yet will I toil, for labor ever brings
Surcease of sorrow from misfortune's stings.

CHILDHOOD.

V.

CHILDREN are living poems. Could we read
The varied fancies of one lovely mind,
Within that ample volume we would find
High inspirations and a fame indeed!
These Infant Sonnets of our Epic life
Sparkle like gems in nature's coronet —
Bright as rare diamonds in a mass of jet,
Pure as fair Peris in a world of strife.
O would that earth could keep them ever young!
In their poetic wisdom is a reach,
That all defies the impotence of speech,
When honeyed music's melting from their tongue.
Spare, then, ye sin-scarred souls, the Critic-rod
From Childhood-angels — who belong to God.

HOMELESS.

VI.

I HAVE a home no more. The humble cot
Which, like a modest bride half hid in flowers,
Smiled all its blessings on life's morning hours,
Has passed from earth — now strangers own the spot.
The guardian power that holds my life in trust
Still shows the picture to my loving view,
And paints the blessed forms, to memory true,
That long have slept in consecrated dust.
All things have changed — my home is home no more —
The favorite haunts where hopes, despairs, and loves.
Once circled round my soul like cottage doves
The glass of Fancy only can restore.
The alien plowshare, for unnumbered years,
Has made deep furrows for my bitter tears.

MUSIC.

VII.

THE world is full of Music. In blest tones
An undersong forever greets the ear
Of him that hath the delicate sense to hear
What fairy-world is voicing to the zones.
Delicious strains, perchance to thee unknown,
Float by on every osier-swaying breeze,
With echoes from the deep resounding seas
Where nereids sing and priceless gems are strown.
The eager winds hymn to the listening stars
That pause, enwrapt, in their eternal round,
Then pale and faint with the enchanting sound,
Till marshalled forth by sanguinary Mars.
Earth never sleeps: its music-laden breath
Whispers alway a song of life and death.

LOVE.

VIII.

MY heart is ever yearning with a love

That brooks not of control. Some nameless fair

Forever claims my amatory prayer.

Were there no mortals 'neath the heavens above —

No sentient soul upon the earth save I,

All known delights that charm the sense of sight,

Hill, mountain, plain — thy starry beauty, night!

Fountains and flowers that glad the earth and sky

Would seize my adoration. Warbling birds,

Soaring through space, would thrill my soul with
bliss ;

The newborn zephyr ravishing a kiss

Would whisper to my heart love-breathing words ;

And — ere my loneliness gave way to groans —

I would bow down and worship stocks and stones.

SYMPATHY.

IX.

My soul is writhing with a starving pain
For human sympathy. Is there no one
Of all who live beneath the Eden sun
To share my joys and sorrows? Shall in vain
My pleadings be and wildly thrown to earth
Where scorn, revenge, and low despairs have birth?
Must I, alone, drive down life's stormy main,
No Pilot friend or blest companion nigh
To steady up my prow from breaker-wrong
And still life's tempest with a Saviour song?
O why is earth so passing fair, since I
Must dwell companionless and view apart
Its springtide glories with an aching heart —
A hopeless thing — unfit to live or die?

RAPTURE.

X.

HE who enwraps himself in dark despair,
And dwells apart in utter loneliness,
Where no dear angel ever comes to bless
With love divine and beauty heavenly rare —
Of form and feature most divinely fair —
Has barred the way to every happiness.
O dearer far to me one rapturous hour
With her I love, in converse low and sweet, —
When heart and soul in fond communion meet, —
Than laurelled Fame with all her regal power! .
The world is all my own in that blest time —
All climes and seasons mingle into one,
No sin nor sorrow lives beneath the sun,
And love assumes a majesty sublime!

TO BAYARD TAYLOR.

XI.

My heart goes forth to meet thee as a friend
With whom in foreign climes I've wandered long
Where fair Italia melts the soul to song,
And rare delights from azure deeps descend.
Onward and upward like the morning lark
That springs exultant from the cold, dim earth,
Where joy and sorrow have an equal birth,
My wakened spirit leaps from out the dark
To thy heart's home — swift as the viewless wind:
Spurning all fetters fate hath ever wrought,
With thee to revel in the realms of thought —
Owning no sovereign but a noble mind —
Where orient skies with olden glory beams,
To live new raptures — dream but poet-dreams.

T. D. JONES' BUST OF S. P. CHASE.

XII.

A MANLY beauty marks the lofty brow ;
A patriot firmness lives in every line,
Where mercy lingers with a grace divine
That lights each feature with a radiant glow.
Seen through this marble thought, there calmly lies
The undercurrent of a noble mind —
A gentle nature, warm and true and kind —
That cheers the humble and enchants the wise :
O'er all, a high ambition seems to tower
As from a groundwork of heroic deeds —
Made strong by faith and bound by loving creeds —
With human weal and justice for a dower :
Such is the man this sculptured work endears —
The first of Statesmen and of Financiers.

REWARD OF MERIT.

XIII.

WHY should I wear my wretched life away
In vain attempt to wreathe my brow with bays,
When Burns' and Otway's consecrated lays
Kept not the fiend of famine from his prey?
When shades like these and Chatterton's arise
And pour a dismal wail upon the ear,
A starving shriek that makes one pale with fear,
Why should I burden earth with my weak cries?
Their forms have mouldered down to holy dust,
Their names add lustre to a nation's fame,
They won, as martyrs, an eternal name,
Their country paid them — with an ashen crust!
Enough for me to worship at a shrine
Where true hearts weep and agony is mine.

THE POET.

XIV.

BEHOLD in him the Adam born again ;

The world is new to his unwearied eye ;

The mountains grand, the variegated plain,

The boundless earth — the deep eternal sky,

Where myriad worlds are twinkling with delight ;—

All things that are, for him were made and given.

The golden day, the solemn shades of night,

The power of good and ill, the hope of heaven ;

The bliss of love — the bitter cup of woe —

The will to do and dare — the meed of fame ;

The damning crimes that drag a soul below ;

The glorious deeds that win a godlike name !

All these are his — as they alike are thine, —

The varied gifts of life from hands divine.

COURAGE.

XV.

LET not the laggard world retard thy course;
Thou hast a life to live — a work to do;
Gird up thy loins and keep the goal in view —
Strive for the promised land, with giant force.
Stop not to view the sunsets of the past —
The golden glories of the days gone by —
Behold, for thee, a rising eastern sky
Bows with a welcome where thy lot is cast.
Thy life is still the ancient Adam birth;
The world was made for thee, not thou for it;
Far in the Eden-east the sun is lit
To guide thy steps upon a newborn earth.
Press on to glory's goal, nor pause to see
Forbidden fruits and serpents hid for thee.

PILGRIMAGE.

XVI.

My hope has gone before me ; I can see
Far in the distant east a glimmering light
That lures me from the present dismal night
Of grim despair, and sets my spirit free.
The mists rise slowly from my struggling soul ;
The darkness of the past is closing in
And blotting out the old footprints of sin,
That erewhile covered earth from pole to pole.
My tent is struck ; here will I dwell no more,
But seek a land of knowledge, where the skies
Reach on forever with eternal dyes
That light to worlds—unknown in days of yore.
Though I should pause where pilgrim sages feast,
I'll seek new wisdom in a boundless East.

SECRET GRIEF.

XVII.

THERE is a canker-worm in my poor heart
That blights the life of every cherished bloom ;
And yet I vaguely smile above the tomb
Where buried hopes and agonies have part.
The nameless torture of th' envenomed sting
I bear in silence, for I scorn to show
The godless world my sacred fane of woe.
Who cares to know the anguish which I bring
Where fairy forms make earth a paradise —
Where music urges, and the dancers reel
In mystic mazes of the head and heel —
Voluptuous motion, tuned to amorous sighs?
My selfish woe would make a discord there —
Then, Idiot Laughter, hide my blank despair!

TO MARCUS A. FINCH.

XVIII.

To win a friend I fought through youth's sweet
prime —

My sad heart wounded by the wasteful war —
Till hope was routed by the spears of time.

My soul then drifted on life's ocean waste,
Its helmless bark without a guiding star,

Impelled by shifting winds with reckless haste
O'er treacherous seas to barren isles afar —

Where mirage false and slaves of passion are.
But lo! a star arose to gild that hour
Of my dark life-dream, with a magic power;
And I, as he who passed a dismal night,

When o'er a wild expanse of waters hurled,
Blest its pure radiance, as he blest the light
That ushered to his ken a New-found World.

TO MISS C. L. B.

ON RECEIVING A GIFT OF GRAPES.

XIX.

A GRAPESEED cost Anacreon his life ;

“More grape,” from Captain Bragg, once saved the
day,

When General Taylor ruled the battle-fray
Somewhere in Mexico, with loyal strife.

The juice of grape, when freely used, has made
Poets and punsters out of common men,

And raised a Tailor from “nine parts” to ten ;
Made even cowards shout — “We ’re not afraid !”

The very shadow of the fig and vine

Is held most sacred, both in prose and verse, —

A place where lovers their sweet vows rehearse
With holy rapture and with joy divine.

Thy vine and fig-tree bower I ne’er may see,
Yet in my grapeful moods I ’ll sweetly dream of thee.

JONES' BUST OF LINCOLN.

XX.

OF antique outline, yet a modern head, —
The Cincinnatus of the present age, —
A man of wit, a statesman, and a sage,
Whose patriot ardor strikes the traitor dead.
Such is the man that holds the helm of state,
And guides the Nation from the stormy shore
Where hungry breakers howl and hiss and roar,
To whelm in ruin and devour with hate.
No party clique can lure him from his path;
No subtle demagogue can make him swerve:
A nation's firmness centres in his nerve,
And rebel cowards tremble at his wrath.
The Sculptor has so nobly done his part,
You see a living presence — not the art.

TO SISTER HARRIET.

XXI.

THOU dear companion of my early years,
My heart still throbs in unison with thine ;
Though far apart our spirits may repine,
In thought we blend our sympathy and tears.
This little day is not our all of life ;
And though the storms of fate divide each bark,
There comes a time when, like the morning lark,
Our souls will soar beyond all human strife.
In yon blue sphere our joys will make amends
For all the sorrows of our present state,—
Beyond the shoals of time, and adverse fate,—
With father, mother, sisters — heavenly friends
Who passed from earth, to wait, in angel guise,
And give us welcome to their Paradise.

TO ———

XXII.

ONE gave you shelter when your friends were few,
And shared his little joys to make you glad;
Nay, gave you all his scanty boyhood had,
And was the friend he hoped to find in you.
At length a prosperous dawn beheld the fame
That he, your earnest champion, had foretold —
When you were blest with tokens manifold
That wealth bestows on those who win a name;
Your old-time friend at least was not forgot —
He too was reaching forth to catch the light
That cheers earth's pilgrims from the shores of
night,
And makes this world an Eden-haunted spot; —
Your coward-hands were raised to thwart his cause,
That should have glowed with envious applause.

TO ———

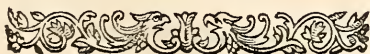
XXIII.

WHAT right had he, that was your boyhood friend,
To seek for honor in the selfsame path —
But to secure the venom of your wrath,
And that vile hate that meanest natures blend?
'T were well in him to chant your ceaseless praise,
And sound your name where'er his travel led —
But when he sought Fame's ashen crust instead,
'T was right to spurn his famine-haunted days.
Why was he not the sycophantic thing,
And servile puppet to your every word? —
Why should he be so damnably absurd
As dare to praise but what you chose to sing?
Yet he aspires. Beseech the vengeful Nine
To crush the worm that dares to sing or shine.

TO ———

XXIV.

YOU live your life ; no mortal should complain
That Nature owns all characters as hers,
From lofty manhood down to craven curs,
With ape and owl and monkey in the train.
'T were wrong to seek for noble traits in you
Who know but self, and overselfish ends ; —
'T is right in you to sacrifice those friends
Through whom the pigmy to a giant grew ?
Live out your life ; 't is yours in fame and name ;
Loud brag and bluster wins the world's applause —
The drum, though hollow, makes a noise that draws —
A Judas-kiss may gain ignoble fame.
Your sphere in life is no concern of mine,
Though you should sink or soar — or sting or shine.



MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



RALLYING SONG.

RALLY, boys! rally! your hearths are in danger;
Hear the wild wailing of sweetheart and wife!
Homes are destroyed by guerrilla and ranger,
Loved ones are shrieking for honor and life.
Cut-throat marauders are nearing our borders,
Deep dyed in crimes it were horrid to name.
Hark! your commander is shouting his orders.
“Death to all dastards of infamous fame!”

Pause not to make sad adieus to a mother;
Linger not long for a lover's last kiss;
Off! in defence of wife, sister, or brother;
Brief be your vengeance and lasting your bliss!
Shoulder your rifle and rush on to battle,
Strike for the banner your forefathers gave;
Fall — if you must — where the cannon's loud rattle
Echoes in thunder-tones over the brave.

Strike, as those heroes long famous in story ;

Gird up your loins like the giants of old ;

Battle for honor and virtue and glory !

Reap your reward when your story is told.

Fight like your sires in the great Revolution ;

Win back the freedom that gained us a name ;

Crush out rebellion and all its pollution ;—

Nations will honor your valor and fame.



IN MEMORIAM—GENERAL WILLIAM H.
LYTLE.

HE died a soldier's death ;
No weary, wasting breath
Of slow decay consumed his heart and brain ;
But, rich in manhood's pride,
With loyal zeal he died
Where the rebel foe were fiercest on the plain.

When his country made the call,
He gave his dearest all,
And with patriotic ardor sought the field ;
Where his sword, with lightning stroke,
Flashed through the battle-smoke,
A rebel went to death unanealed.

No tears be shed for him
Whose earnest eyes grew dim
In his eager search of glory or the grave ;
For the battle-field of fame,
When it won his deathless name,
Added laurels to the banner of the brave.

AU REVOIR.

DEAR Mary, in the happy times
When we sang songs in rosy bowers,
We little dreamed that war's alarms
Would ring the knell of blissful hours;
No stormy clouds o'ercast us then, —
No thunder-trump or lightning scath,
With scars of more than mortal hate,
Had ever crossed our peaceful path.

But now a gloom is on the land;
Our yearning hopes and joys have fled,
And all the flowers of life's sweet spring
Are withered, faded, sere and dead;
Our weary eyes, when backward cast
To catch a glimpse of bygone years,
Are like the lily-cups we knew,
That always seemed o'erweighed with tears.

Yet no despair shall ever rend
Thy perfect image from my breast;
My only love, my more than friend,
My hope, my joy, my angel guest;
Though we no more on earth should meet,
In clasps when love forgets disguise,
No war alarms shall chill our heat
In yonder blue eternal skies.

A REBEL REFRAIN.

PASS round the bottle, boys! Drink to the Devil,
men!

Fire up your hearts with the spirit of hell;
Strike the loud hewgag! we'll have a grand revel,
men!

Doing the deeds of foul fiends when they fell.

Down with the "stripes and stars"!

Up with the "stars and bars"!

Hail to Jeff Davis, the king of our band!

Pass round the can again;

Drink every man again;

We will be rulers, or ruin the land!

Old Buck and Breckenridge — Buckner and Beauregard!

Benedict Arnolds of baser degree!

Black-hearted traitors, arouse ye, and show regard,
Drain your blue ruin to renegade Lee!

On with the revel, men;

Drink to the Devil, men;

Demons of darkness ne'er dwelt upon land,

Daring to do the things

Done by our underlings —

Davis our king, and the rest of our band!

Cups full of sack to our well-beloved Benjamin!

He is a thief of a lower degree!

Whiskey or gin may arouse some revenge in him

Dear to the devils that join in our spree!

Such white trash as Slidell —

And Mason, the idle —

Are not worth the dregs of the glass in your hand:

But Marshall — big eater!

And Price, the retreater!

Have ruined vast acres of Uncle Sam's land!

Floyd is a double-dyed traitor most infamous;

Gall were too sweet as a pledge to his name;

Yet *he* stole our arms — and Uncle Sam's "tin" for
us, —

Give him his due — though it blacken his fame!

He and George Crittenden —

Dogs that have bit again

Hands that were holding most promising food;

When the foe "Forward!" cries

They show their cowardice —

Fleeing, like gallows-birds, home to their brood!

Don't strain your lungs, my lads, shouting for Walker;

He's but a sprat to the whales of our sea;

A bumper for Stephens — the Devil's own talker

On black or white subjects — whichever they be.

Drink deep to the tall fry —

Waste none on the small fry —

Drain to the ruin of our beloved land;

And — should our king's crown fall —
Old Uncle Sam's downfall
Will follow the ravage begun by our band.

Pass round the bottle, boys! drink to the Devil, men!
Fire up your hearts with the spirit of hell;
Strike the loud hewgag! we'll have a grand revel,
men!

Doing the deeds of foul fiends when they fell.

Down with the "stripes and stars"!

Up with the "stars and bars"!

Hail to Jeff Davis, the king of our band!

Pass round the can again;

Drink every man again; —

We will be rulers, or ruin the land!



ANACREONTIC.

FILL the cup and fill the bowl,
Drown the dreary demon, Care;
Whilst the earth remains our goal
We will make it Eden-rare;
Then arise each social soul,
Pledge ye all that's good and fair!

Drink to her whose maidenhood
Never suffered an eclipse;
Drink to her whose royal blood
Should be won by poet-lips;
Bumpers all—for by the rood,
Out shall go the knave that sips!

Drain a draft of Rhenish down
To my sparkling Delia's eyes;
Love might languish in her frown,
In her smile is paradise;
Drink to her the world's renown,
Beauty's queen beneath the skies.

Drain the cup and drain the bowl,
We will have a regal rouse;
Care has fled each social soul;
Venus wins our warmest vows;
Earth is now a glorious goal—
Old King Bacchus crowns our brows!



SUNSHINE.

GATHER sunshine from all the gay pleasures of life,
And hoard it away for the dark coming days ;
Gather songs where the loveliest bowers are rife
With bluebirds and linnets rehearsing their lays ;
As the bee gathers honey from summer's bright
blooms,

And dreams of fair meadows through winter's bleak
air —

Do thou garner away all life's richest perfumes,
And welcome, with light-hearted laughter, despair.

'T were unwise to believe the Great Giver of good
Had destined our days to be clouded with pain ;
Though our hot tears of anguish fall deep as a flood,
The sun-bow of beauty will shine from the rain.
When love enters the heart there's no corner for
gloom ;

If love lights the eye, every object is fair ;
Holy spirits of beauty leap forth from the tomb —
Not even the grave is a place for despair !

THE SENSITIVE SOUL.

SWEET spring-tides of pleasure forever shall roll,
And wash with glad waters our sorrows away;
Awake then to beauty, O sensitive soul,
And bask in the love-beams of God-given day!
The lark's morning lay, as it springs from the earth,
And warms its cool wings in the rose-tinted sky,
Is not more exultant in musical mirth
Than the heart-songs of mortals — too joyous to
die!

This world were a wilderness wild with all woe
If love ceased to charm, or affection to melt;
When love reigns triumphant 't is heaven below —
Sin, sickness, or sorrow are never more felt;
O love, and O beauty, thy magical spells
With spring-tides of pleasure forever shall roll,
Until the great heart of thy ocean-like swells
Shall deluge with rapture each sensitive soul!



THE SKELETON BANQUET.

I WAKE in torture ; my pained eyes are dim ;
A hideous nightmare grapples with my spirit ;
My brain is thronged with visions ghastly grim,
The damned inherit.

A scorching fever rages in my veins,
My skin is parchment and my tongue is iron ;
I cry for water, and I dream that rains
My house environ.

Death came last night, and with triumphant grin
Bore me away upon my couch and blanket,
Where mouldy skeletons, with dismal din,
Sate at a banquet.

'T was in a charnel-hall of strange device,
That might have been a mausoleum or mansion,
Which changed anon from one of elfin size
To vast expansion.

Strange phantom forms were flitting to and fro,
Obsequious servants to the party present ;
The light, which set each figure all aglow,
Was phosphorescent.

There was a scent of coffins in the air,
And each grim goblin sat on one inverted;
Palls, biers, and winding-sheets, death's emblems, there
Were all perverted.

How dry bones rattled and how dull joints creaked,
Whilst they arose to drink and pledge a brother! —
As with their gaunt and fleshless arms they wreaked
Thoughts to each other!

Outside the tumult of this charnel-hall
From unseen forms I heard low-muttered curses;
And through the curtain — a torn funeral pall —
Saw countless hearses.

The dry bones clattered and the feast went on,
Although no real viands were apparent;
No wine — yet countless goblets were withdrawn
From casks transparent.

At length the host uprose: with ogre air
He waved his arm and pledged the guests assembled:
"The Monarch Death, the Tyrant everywhere!"
All drank, and trembled.

Then came a song — a low and hopeless moan,
The burden of despair; no words were uttered,
And yet all human woe was in the groan
Thus strangely muttered.

The dismal dirge, that was so weirdly sung,
Pierced through my bones into the very marrow;
Each sensate fibre of my heart was wrung
With deathless sorrow.

Strange agonies ran through my tortured soul,
A sense of life and death alternate giving;
Was this, alas, to be my final goal —
Thus dead and living?

Now, at a mystic signal, all arose
And joined a wizard dance, with fearful rattle,
Which seemed a contest, as if mortal foes
Had met in battle.

It was a ghastly mockery of life,
Impelled by some resistless power supernal,
A fiendish show of love, hate, peace, and strife,
Dire and infernal.

Orchestral discord smote my aching sense,
Composed of dying groans and wailings dismal;
A jargon of all sounds, alike intense,
From vaults abysmal.

This was the music of that hellish rout,
Which urged the polkas and the promenading;
Remorseless sounds that even Death might scout
With fierce upbraiding.

I may not say how long this dance went on, —
My senses all in living death were humbled, —
But at the glimmer of a ghostly dawn,
The dry bones crumbled.

They crumbled into dust, and all was still;
This dreadful silence, after such a riot,
Appalled my soul with coward fear, until
I cursed the quiet.

A church-bell tolls! The goblin scene has fled,
Yet mortal pangs remain with life's strange essence,
And nameless phantoms hover round my bed
With hideous presence.

The horrid clatter of the dry-bone dead,
Their hob and nobbing o'er a spectral table;
The clacking teeth and wag of eyeless head,
This charnel Babel,

With all the discord of a demon curse,
Still through my brain, with fevered frenzy rages,
Until it seems the dream I now rehearse
Endured for ages.



LOST TREASURES.

SOME caitiff wretch has filched away
The heart and soul of all my pleasures ;
My household gods — my starlight ray —
My best and dearest treasures.

Where are ye now, O blessed books,
O where those intellectual pages
Whose summer songs and babbling brooks
Go laughing down the ages ?

O where are ye, beloved ones,
So full of wisdom, wit, and story ;
Bright with the bliss of Eden suns
And all their golden glory ?

Where now is my great-hearted Burns,
Who shamed the lordly lads in ermine
With songs of dewy flowers and ferns —
And many a noble sermon ?

O where is "Holy Willie's Prayer" —
Where God-forsaken "Tam O'Shanter" ?
Thou too art gone, sweet Bard of Ayr —
Farewell to "Rab the Ranter" !

Where are the hearts that blest my home?

Dear Holmes, my heart is with thee straying!
Say, Autocrat, where dost thou roam,
Thy prose and verse betraying?

Where streamlets stray and rivers run,
And brown old forests stand defiant,
Hast thou again thy life begun,
O thou, my Druid, Bryant?

I'm hoodwinked out of Thomas Hood,
A book I've loved from earliest childhood;
Upon its "Bridge of Sighs" I've stood —
Wept with it in the wildwood.

I love its prose, revere its verse,
Admire its wit, laugh at its folly;
Have wept o'er "Eugene Aram's Curse"—
And "Ode to Melancholy."

O "bring to me the captive now"
That stole my Willis and "Parhassius";
The mark of Cain is on his brow —
His back — receive my lashes!

Where are my "Pencilings by the Way,"
Where all those rare imaginations —
Those blessings of the minstrel's lay,
And delicate creations?

Where Morris? He whose master-hand
Hath swept the lyre with exultation;
Whose songs have, like a magic wand,
Enchanted all the nation.

I've lost my "Voices of the Night";
My "Psalm of Life" incessant urges
Just vengeance on the thieving wight—
And chants his direful dirges.

"Stop thief!" I cry, with might and main;
Bring back my heart and soul's best pleasures;
Or mayst thou know eternal pain;
O give me back my treasures!

Exalt him on the gallows-tree,
There let him hang as high as Haman;
A thief of books, all must agree,
Is worse than a highwayman!



IDEAL PLEASURES.

INSCRIBED TO SALLIE BRYAN PIATT.

THERE are pleasures the Minstrels have never yet
sung,

And blisses defying despair ;

THERE are raptures that tremble on heart and on
tongue,

More holy than eventide prayer.

THERE are joys as immortal as life-giving light,

Eternal as blossoms of Spring ;

THERE is beauty as faultless in form to the sight

As fabled Narcissus can bring.

THERE are feelings no Poet can ever portray,

And faces no Artist can paint ;

THERE 's a halo of glory far brighter than day—

Devotion ne'er dreamed by a saint ;

THERE are treasures untold in the domain of mind,

And jewels no eye may behold ;

THERE 's an essence more viewless and subtle than
wind,

More precious than silver and gold.

There are gardens of Eden that Satan and Sin
May never pollute with their strife —
Luscious fruits, more than tempting, are growing
within,

Where virtue forever is rife.

There are flowers that rival in fragrance and dyes
The loveliest blooms of the East;
There are splendors far brighter than orient skies;
Heart-gushings, when music hath ceased.

There 's an Ideal World, where the glories of earth
Are never o'erburdened with clay;
Where Genius exults in its God-given birth
Throughout a perpetual day;
Where the soul bows to beauty's all-conquering shrine,
And harps its wild songs on the air;
With an ecstasy revels in raptures divine —
And laughs at the frown of Despair.



TO CLARA.

DEAR Clara, when I see thee not
My soul is dark, my heart is sad;
A shadow falls on each loved spot
Thy presence erst with glory clad;
My sunlight passes from the sky,
And leaves me in a double night,
Beloved, when thou art not nigh —
For thou art all my life and light.

When with thee, all my pulses thrill
With raptures words cannot express;
The boundless world with love I fill,
And worship thus thy loveliness;
New beauty reigns o'er all the earth,
And nature chants her sweetest lays —
A tribute to thy peerless worth —
A song of triumph in thy praise.

In passing through the future years
'T would smoothe my thorny path to know
That one blest soul would heed my tears —
If tears from manhood's eye could flow:

Where'er my wandering steps may roam,
 Whatever skies above shall bend,
Thy heart will be my only home —
 For thou art more to me than friend.

Thy image haunts me in my dreams,
 In blessed sleep we wander down
The vale of years, until it seems
 A lengthened life of love has flown.
Why do I ever wake to know
 My dream of happiness is o'er?
O sleeping joy! O waking woe!
 I never knew such love before.

And dare I ask if in thy breast
 There lives one loving thought of me;
And may I deem that I am blest,
 And dedicate my life to thee?
O let me dream that hand in hand
 We yet may share our smiles and tears,
And journey thus to that blest land
 Where all is love, through endless years.



SUSPENSE.

TIME is all too precious, dearest,
And if thou my love reverest,
Do not kill me with delay, —
I would know my fate to-day.

I have loved thee long and dearly;
And thou too hast loved sincerely;
Thou wilt have my heart always, —
Let me know my fate to-day.

By each precious gift and token;
By the vows I ne'er have broken;
By thy beauty's heavenly ray, —
I would know my fate to-day.

By yon moon, whose pallid splendor
Shone upon our love so tender,
In the maple groves of May, —
I must learn my fate to-day.

By our sweetly stolen kisses;
By unnumbered, nameless blisses;
By thy blessed self, I pray
Thou wilt answer me to-day.

Savage fears my soul environ ;
Soothe and save me, lovely siren ;
Do not kill me with delay, —
I must know my fate to-day !



THE BROKEN VOW.

THERE is a heartache of the soul
No human power may e'er control ;
There is a frenzy of the brain
Which maketh madness lighter pain ;
There is a sterner foe than death,
When pangs are breathed with every breath ;
There 's something darker than despair —
A mildew blight on all that 's fair ;
A something deeper than distress —
The hopeless moan of loneliness :
O what can soothe the bosom's strife
When we outlive the love of life ?

I knew thee when my years were few,
And loved, as other children do ;
That love lit up my manhood's brow,
And bowed my soul with solemn vow
That I would win a worthy name
For one more dear to me than fame :
The patient toil, the years of pain,
The scars that on my brow remain ;
The wasted form, the fading eye,
The broken voice, the smothered sigh,

Tell how remorseless time hath wrought,
On one whose triumphs came to naught;
The fame I sought and gained for thee
Now stabs my soul with misery.

O was it just, in those bright years,
To vow with virtue's holy tears,
Thou still wouldst wear the virgin crown
Until I claimed thee as mine own?
Through weary days and bitter nights
Thy love still beaconed higher flights;
Thy light divine still led me on
Till morning fame began to dawn;
Thy voice sang all the stillness through,
And cheered me on to dare and do;
Thy heart throbbed music with my own,
Until as one the twain were grown:
Could no one else, with vengeance rife,
Destroy my very life of life?
O was it left for thee to sever
The tie which should have bound forever?

Now harder than a wayside stone,
And colder yet, my heart hath grown;
No future brightens through my tears,—
My soul is burdened with dead years;
The loathsome corpse of all the past,
Now more than hateful, clinging fast.
The world, a charnel-house of gloom,
Has now become my living tomb.

I scorn the laurel wreath of fame ;
'T would sear my brow with burning shame ;
I spurn the gift I won for thee ;—
Death weaves a cypress crown for me ;
Since thou my love nor fame can share,
I grudge thee even my despair.



ROBERT BURNS.

· WRITTEN FOR THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

Was born one hundred years ago,
The bard whose saddest songs were sweet;
For whom Old Scotia's tears will flow
As long as heart-warm bosoms beat;
Was born a Poet and a Man
As noble as e'er trod the earth;
Large-souled and rounded in the plan
Bestowed on a prophetic birth.

With more than frater-feeling strong,
A worthy fabric we would raise;
With shreds from his immortal song
Enweave our warp and woof of praise.
Though toiling up the steep of fame
'Midst hopeless pangs that rent his soul,
He won a time-enduring name,
Inscribed upon the glorious scroll.

No kindly heart would care to know
If thoughtless follies stained the name
Of one who keenly felt the glow
Of friendship and the softer flame:

We veil his errors from our sight ;
The sternness and the bitter wrong
Of fortune's cold enduring spite
Was suffered by this son of song.

Still on the banks of bonny Doon
The flowers are blooming fresh and fair,
As when he sang that wailing tune,
Or mourned his fate beside the Ayr ;
The lingering star with lessening ray
Still beacons on the brow of morn,
As when it ushered in the day
Sweet Mary from his soul was torn.

The peck o' maut that Willie brewed
For Rab and Allan, long ago,
Has many a glorious eye bedewed,
And eased full many a heart of woe ;
That song, and all his songs divine,
Have cheered the Cotter's lonely night,
Since in the blessed days lang syne
His soul sang out its rare delight.

At length, dejected and forlorn,
With every human anguish torn, —
His pride bowed down by cruel scorn, —
It seemed a luxury to mourn ;
His life was ever at extremes —
Ecstatic joy or bitter care ;
Now blissful thoughts or baneful dreams,
Now magic thrills or mad despair.

Although in manhood's golden prime
His weary spirit sank to rest,
His fame had reached that height sublime
Where genius reigns among the blest ;
The lowliest peasant sang his praise ;
In princely halls his power was known ;
All hearts embalmed his tuneful lays ; —
He stood unrivalled and alone !

Whilst dews of heavenly pity flow
Within this care-worn world of ours,
His fate will claim the tears of woe,
His brow receive earth's fairest flowers ;
As long as skies contain a star,
As long as earth shall bear a bloom,
No vandal foot shall ever mar
The daisies springing round his tomb.



ADA.

LIKE a lovely inspiration,
Or a poet's blest creation,
ADA blossomed into life —
Blossomed in this world of strife.
O, so helpless, sweet, and tender,
Human love could not defend her
From the winding-sheet and pall —
From the fate that comes to all.

Golden sunlight, idly playing,
Seemed her silken tresses straying;
In the blue depths of her eyes
Heaven had painted paradise;
Envious Angels, from her birth,
Wooed her spirit back from earth, —
Won her to the shining spheres,
From this thorny vale of tears.

Where sweet angel lips caress her,
She will be our intercessor;
She will clasp her lily hands
In the hallowed golden lands;
In the blessed fields elysian,
Ne'er beheld by mortal vision;
Ceaseless for our intercession,
Till we gain the bright possession.

From the stormy clouds of pain
Joy will break on us again;
Rapture at the bliss of meeting
Ada, with eternal greeting,
On the peaceful morning shore —
Lost to sorrows evermore;
In the depth of her blue eyes
She will keep our Paradise.



THE SEASIDE.

THE ocean chafed the chiding shore,
The thunder muttered far at sea,
What time in love's delicious lore
Thou sangst sweet strains delightedly,
Until my spirit seemed to soar
Where angel raptures only be.

The autumn moon shone softly down
Through trellised leaves in gales of light;
A wayward glow that seemed to crown
Thy brow with jewels heavenly bright;
And gems from magic mines were strown
O'er thy loved form that blessed night.

Thy lips were bathed in honey dews
Distilled from flowers of paradise:
So tempting sweet! I could but choose
To take them captive, by surprise,
With soul-felt kisses, though I lose
All other joys beneath the skies.

Full many a savage storm has past,
With thunder-scars and lurid light,
O'er that fair scene, which was our last;
But yet the memory of that night
No clouds of gloom can overcast, —
It will remain forever bright.



THE NIGHT OF DEATH.

WHEN will the weary day go by,
And usher in life's blessed night?
The world is all too full of light
For those who would, but cannot die.

O darkness, let thy curtain down,
And close the play of knaves and fools,
With their suborned and hireling tools,
Ere dire remorse thy brows encrown.

There 's too much light, O garish day!
We see too much of shame and sin,
Of fearful crime with mocking grin,
And fiends that prowl in wait for prey.

Let God's own breath blow out thy light
And close the scene, since selfish men
Have made this earth a savage den,
Where might usurps the place of right.

O listen what the Angel saith :
"Time is, time was — no more shall be,
For Time is now Eternity, —
This is the blessed night of Death.

“The worn-out world has passed away;
All sentient souls anew are born
Upon this resurrection morn —
The dawn of God’s eternal day.

“The garish sun no more will shine
On evil deeds and evil ways;
Blest tongues now sing their Maker’s praise,
And worship in a light divine.

“Man’s weary day of life is done;
The sinner and the sanctified,
And all that ever lived and died,
Their goal of bliss or woe have won.”



LITTLE ALMA.

THE light which faded from your eye
Hath lent the skies a purer blue ;
And now there is a holier tie
That draws our souls from earth to you ;
O, it were more than bliss to die
With such a paradise in view.

How desolate, from day to day,
Will be the home that Alma blest ;
How painful will the silence prey
Upon each torn and bleeding breast,
Until they find the better way
Of one who was their angel guest.

In vain will Spring, with all its bloom,
Waft incense on the blessed air,
And drop its violets on a tomb
In memory of the sleeper there ;
Its fairest gifts must fade in gloom
O'er one that was so passing fair.

And though hot tears fell thick as dew
 Upon the green and hallowed sod,
No bud of hope, so pure and true,
 Would raise its head above the clod
As that which on thy bosom grew,
 To blossom in the home of God.



LITTLE LILY.

INSCRIBED TO MRS. BOYD ELLIOTT.

THE violet eye of early Spring
Is moistened with an angel's tear ;
The joyous songs the warblers sing
Have lost a tone once sweet to hear ;
The zephyr's warm and fragrant breath
Now whispers words of life and death.

O bloom, ye flowers of early May,
And sing, ye birds, to soothe my pain,
The Lily of my heartfelt lay
Can join your songs nor blooms again ;
My bud now blooms in yonder skies,
The fairest flower of Paradise.

The sun-bright smiles of Nature's face
Add dimples to the cheek of day
That strive, with earnest love, to chase
Grief-shadows from my soul away ;
But dimpled smiles, nor loving glow,
Can charm away my heartfelt woe.

The cherubs sought my darling one —

The loving angels bade her rest,
Beyond the reach of storm and sun,

In quiet on the Saviour's breast ;
My bud has found a blest release —
My Lily blooms where all is peace.



MELROSE DALE.

THE weary way was bitter cold,
The snow was drifting wild and high,
As I was hastening o'er the wold
Beneath a cheerless winter sky;
But yet my heart was throbbing warm
With many a sweet and loving tale,
I heeded not the blinding storm,
For I was nearing Melrose Dale.

Full many Springs had bloomed and died,
And smiling Summers past away,
And Autumn leaves, in golden pride,
To Winter frosts become a prey —
Since I had wandered from the light
That shone upon me in the vale,
Away into the world of night —
Afar from love and Melrose Dale.

The singing streams have ceased to flow,
Now frozen music fills their bed;
The summer bowers are draped with snow —
The winding-sheet of pleasures dead;

The lovely blooms that spring-time lent
Now perish in the winter gale —
Yet one remains that heaven hath sent
To bless the heart of Melrose Dale.

Does Clara gaze with tearful eye
Out through the winter's bitter pain?
Has she forgot? O agony!
The thought would blight my heart and brain.
It cannot be — she must be true
Despite the storm-wind's warning wail —
Though desolation fills my view,
There's life and love in Melrose Dale.



A SOUL'S LAMENT.

FROM Eden childhood I have strayed,
Till lost within a thorny glade
Where serpents lurk beneath the shade.

The years grow dim as on I go,
My path is full of pain and woe;
I tread with bleeding feet and slow.

No angel voice e'er calls to me;
No beacon light I ever see —
I'm lost in hopeless misery.

Life's lingering light is wellnigh done;
I ne'er may see to-morrow's sun;
The goal of Death will soon be won.

What have I done throughout the past,
With all my schemes of grand and vast,
To make my memory ever last?

Ah! nothing to console my pride,
Or prove I ever lived or died;
I perish the unsanctified.

If Heaven bestowed on me the power
To live beyond the fleeting hour,
My slothful soul ne'er gained the dower.

Or, if I strove with might through day,
And labored in the night alway,
I woke to naught but common clay.

Howe'er my life with love was fraught,
My inspirations came to naught —
I ne'er attained the bliss I sought.

O, would I had not stepped aside,
With shameless Pleasure for my guide,
That left me where the fiends abide.

Had I pursued the narrow path,
That leads up from eternal wrath,
I ne'er had felt this fiery scath.

The shards are sharp, the way is long,
O save me from my bitter wrong,
THY love is great; THY arm is strong.

O hear my hopeless dying moan,
As on these burning sands I groan;
I would not perish thus alone.

Protect me from mine agony,
And lead my wandering heart to Thee ;
My tortured spirit would be free.

Thy blood hath washed my guilt away ;
My body cleaves to common clay ;
My soul would find the perfect day.



THE ANGEL OF CHARITY.

THE winter winds, with bitter pain,
Are wailing through the stormy street,
Where human anguish moans in vain,
And pity's heart has ceased to beat;
But hush! a sound of keener woe
Falls on the listening ear of night —
Though fierce the storm, misfortune's blow
Is still more savage in its blight; —

A voice within a lowly shed —
A mother's voice, with hopeless moan —
Is heard, in prayer, to ask for bread,
And will ye give her, then, a stone?
"O God of mercy!" such her prayer,
"Let not my darlings starve in vain,
O leave them not to gaunt despair,
But still their hunger-cry of pain."

The storm abates; upon the scene
The moon now sheds its mellow light;
The drifting clouds — the blue serene —
And stars that bless the waning night;

And now, in answer to the prayer,
An angel from the morning skies
Makes music all the discord there,
And turns the place to paradise.



LIFE'S SPRING-TIME.

O TIME of wild but sweet unrest,
When hope is ever on the wing,
When life is like the bloom of spring,
And mortals are supremely blest, —
Of thee, O youth, I fain would sing!

When earth is so like paradise,
And heaven breathes forth in every gale,
Where lovers tell the olden tale,
And gaze out life with spell-bound eyes,
Beneath the stars that kiss the vale.

In fancy let me dream again
That boyhood pleasures linger still;
Till every pulse with raptures thrill;
Forgetful all of woe and pain,
And age with its sad, churchyard chill.

Let me recall those halcyon days
Ere yet I knew the world's deceit,
The lying eye — the smiling cheat —
The words once spoke in honeyed phrase
'T were gall and wormwood to repeat.

Thrice happy they who leave this life
Ere age with its attendant train
Of sin and sorrow, care and pain,
And all the bitter pangs of strife,
Has bound them with a hopeless chain.

There comes no second Spring to man ;
The bloom once fled is gone for aye ;
His life becomes a Summer day,
Till Autumn hastens out his span,
And Winter-Death secures the prey.



HARP OF A THOUSAND STRINGS.

“Still harping on.” — *Polonius*.

SPIRITS of men both just and true ;
Spirits of men, like me or you ;
Spirits of maidens, heavenly fair ;
Spirits of earth and spirits of air ;
Spirits that float on golden wings —
All play on the harp of a thousand strings.

The world with rare bright beauty blooms,
And flowers are blown on lowly tombs ;
Dreams of pleasure and dreams of woe . . .
Fall to each mortal's lot below ;
Yet we may shun all evil things,
And play on the harp of a thousand strings.

Each heart still throbs with joy or pain —
A harp — repeating touch and strain ;
Touch gently, then, its trembling chords,
And whisper peace, in choicest words ;
For woe or bliss each echo brings,
When you strike this harp of a thousand strings.

The world, too, is a harp divine,
With heartfelt throbs like mine and thine ;
'T is we who make a vale of woe —
Or paradise of earth below ;
If played aright, sweet music rings
For aye, from this harp of a thousand strings.



REPENTANCE.

O! HUMAN souls, throw wide your doors —
A fellow-mortal pleads his pain;
With anguish bowed he fain implores
His prayer be not in vain.

Some drops of heavenly pity shed
O'er erring souls that go astray,
Lift up a drooping brother's head,
And point the better way.

O boast not loudly, nor elate
Thy power o'er sin and human wrong;
Thy strength to shun thy brother's fate,
Thy faith and virtue strong;

For know, a man of gentlest mould
Some giant sin may lead astray
With mighty power and demon-hold —
With fierce and fiendish sway.

O gentle hearts, throw wide your doors,
And let the pleading stranger in;
A way-worn pilgrim fain implores
Release from shame and sin.

CLOUDLAND CASTLES.

No mortmain grapples with my soaring soul —

I pay no tithes nor taxes on earth's acres ;

No grim collectors for the annual toll

E'er hover on my path like undertakers —

Those human scarecrows, that would fain be wreaking
A vengeance tax on sunlight, air, and speaking.

My wealth is all in Cloudland ; change nor chance

Can ever mar my joyous exultation ;

And yet I scorn not those who would enhance

The gold of earth — which is but degradation ;

Their woes and wants are pangs most ghastly real —

My joys are perfect, pure, and beau-ideal.

No fear of cut-throats e'er disturbs my rest ;

I have no plunder worth a felon's thieving ;

A fire-alarm gives sleep a finer zest —

My humble couch is not a place for grieving ;

No dread for me has any conflagration —

I have no cot nor mansion in creation.

My Castles all are founded in the air ;

No title-deeds could make me more their master ;
Though storms should rage, and winds blow foul or fair,
They 're thunder-proof 'gainst all sorts of disaster.
They 're free from raids from that high-priest Mahomet,
And bid defiance to a long-tailed comet.

My Castles spread throughout eternal space ;

They 're not of stone or unpoetic mortar ;
Imagination fairly fails to trace
The endless outlines where my fancies loiter.
They have no base on ground — for I am groundless ;
They have no limits — for my space is boundless.

Ambition's sun lights up these castles grand,

And through each window streams eternal glory ;
There, airs from heaven are exquisitely bland —
With perfumes laden, music, song, and story ;
And blessed angels fair, from fields elysian,
Are ever present to my Cloudland vision.

Why should I crave the meaner things of earth —

The golden dross, that hate and fears engender —
With all the crimes that curse a human birth —
When I can revel in such harmless splendor ?
Forever free from taxes and taxation —
That greatest curse to mortals in creation !

TO ELMA.

To thee, fair lady, I would pay
A tribute to thy peerless worth ;
And sing a song for thee to-day —
Thou brightest gem of all the earth.
Yet mortal tongue can never tell
How much I love thee and how well.

Thou sunlight of my darkest hours,
Thou vision of my holiest dreams ;
Thou guardian angel of my powers,
Thou Naiad of life's blessed streams ;
How desolate my soul would be
If earth possessed not one like thee.

O, let me claim one passing thought
To bless my soul through coming years,
And I will deem all ills as naught,
And banish all foreboding fears ;
Kind Heaven perpetual bliss would send
If thou wert more to me than friend.

Through sunny climes or northern skies —

Where'er my wandering steps may rove —
'T will seem a walk through paradise,

When I but think of thee and love ;
For I will dare to dream of thee,
And deem thou hast some love for me.

O, fare thee well ! and should we ne'er

Again hold converse low and sweet,
I'll breathe for thee my latest prayer,

And trust that in yon skies we'll meet ;
For heaven would not be heaven to me
Without an angel like to thee.



THE APOLOGY.

TO HATTIE.

YOU 'LL know, when you have wiser grown,
That, gazing on a park or mansion,
The painter deems it all his own —
A picture freehold, in expansion !
Of course he holds no "simple fee" —
And all his untold wealth is groundless,
Yet he may view earth, sky, and sea,
And revel thus in riches boundless.

The poets too, as you will find —
Or have found out — are naughty fellows,
Who sing of love and lovers blind,
And blow intensely florid bellows,
Which puff out pangs they never felt
In gales of wild exaggeration ;
And blaze on hearts too hard to melt,
In bonfires of imagination !

If poet-artists I defend,
You 'll say 't is but a special pleading ;
But hear me to the bitter end,
And give my grief a second reading.

Then, first, you'll please to keep in view,
A lover is as blind as Cupid —
And should one fall in love with you,
He'd prove himself intensely stupid!

I grant that you possess the charms
To set ten poets madly raving;
But then your beauty so alarms,
'T is scarcely worth a poet's braving;
For me to paint those charms were vain —
I tried it once and own my error;
Black eyes nor blue will ne'er again
Inspire my soul with so much terror!

I worship truth; for all that's true
I'm sure I ever had a high sense,
And if I lied, in rhyme, to you,
'T was only a poetic license!
I had no thought of Hymen's noose,
That lassoes people at the altar —
And doubtless you would bid me choose
A worthier fate in hempen halter!



SONG FOR AUTUMN.

Now the huntsman winds his horn ;
Up, my merry friends, away !
 Hearts are bounding,
 Joys resounding —
This is Nature's holiday.

Yonder in the golden morn
Come the clouds with glowing splendor ;
 Earth, in seeming
 Rapture dreaming,
Wakes to all that's sweet and tender.

See the laughing silver rills
Babbling 'midst the groves and meadows !
 Kissing sedges,
 Laving ledges,
Flashing through the lights and shadows.

Now beneath the azure haze
All the earth is growing mellow ;
 Dolphins dying —
 Sere leaves flying —
Rainbow hues all fringed with yellow.

Like the songs of dying swans,
Or the Marseillaise of nations,
 In its sweetness
 And completeness,
Sounds the Autumn's exultations.

Summer's harvest-home is o'er ;
Autumn reigns with genial sway ;
 Hearts are bounding,
 Joys resounding —
This is Nature's holiday !



LIZZIE ROWE.

IN the blest times of long ago —
How long no one may care to know —
I plighted troth with Lizzie Rowe.

Her breath was like the meadow bloom,
When yielding up its sweet perfume
Before the mower's cruel doom.

Her speaking eyes were sparkling bright
Like stars upon a moonless night,
They shone with a transcendent light.

Her agile form was lithe with youth;
Her heart was large with love and truth;
She was a guileless girl, in sooth.

The rose and lily on her cheek
A language more than words could speak;
They paled and blushed with many a freak.

The clusters of her raven hair
Fell o'er a forehead angel-fair,
That ne'er had known a shade of care.

Her joyous laugh was all in tune
With birds that thrilled the heart of June,
Or nightingales beneath the moon.

Her red lips echoed to my kiss
Like sweet sounds lost in love's abyss —
The very ecstasy of bliss.

Long years have passed since last we met;
Long years of sorrow and regret;
And still we twain are single yet.

Yet blessings, Lizzie, still be thine;
Once fairest of thy sex divine —
I would thy sorrows all were mine.

For still I wear within my breast
Thine image when our lives were blest,
In youth's fair morn of sweet unrest.

Still have I loving dreams of thee;
And visions — such as may not be —
That, save myself, but spirits see.

O, more than vain our plighted troth;
And mockery now that sacred oath,
For time has sadly changed us both.

In other climes and far apart,
With failing breath and vacant heart,
We 'll yield to Death's destructive dart.

At length we 'll lay our weary head
Within the selfsame quiet bed
That earth bestows on all her dead.



DREAMS.

I SAW my mother in my sleep ;
Her hand was on my fevered brow ;
The same kind look she always wore
Was beaming on me now.

She prayed as she was wont to pray ;
She wept and kissed me twice and thrice ;
“ Fear God, love all, sleep sweetly on,” —
The same beloved advice.

My boyhood days returned again ;
Our dear old homestead was the same ;
The books and paintings, old and quaint —
My hopes, ambition, aim ;

Then all was clear and pure and bright ;
The world was lovely to my view ;
The seasons came and went, and brought
The beautiful and true.

The school-house — now long passed away —
Stood there with its moss-covered roof ;
The pedagogue, with brow severe —
His ferule and reproof.

Adown the slope the maple-trees
 Stood guard above the dear old spring ;
The pond where we had laved our limbs —
 Still there the grape-vine swing.

The orchard we had robbed in sport ;
 The birds, the bees, the hornet's nest,
Were still the same. The melon patch
 Still there with all the rest.

I passed from thence to home again ;
 That humble cottage still was dear ;
The woodbines clambered up the front —
 The grape-vines in the rear.

My mother sang her vesper hymn ;
 My sisters prayed for human weal ;
The housemaid hurried to and fro —
 And brought the evening meal.

My father's form I could not see ;
 His old capote hung on the wall —
A relic of the loved and lost —
 A monitor to all.*

I slept beneath that lowly roof,
 Where erst the soothing summer rain
Came with angelic sounds from heaven
 To my o'erwearied brain.

The spell is broke. My dreams have fled;
All, all save one have passed away
From that blest dwelling where my life
Was ushered into day.

A stranger's plowshare turns the soil;
Our homestead crumbles in the loam;
A ruthless hand has felled the trees —
No spot remains of home.

My mother's prayer is heard no more;
My sisters sleep beneath the sod;
Their race is run — when mine is o'er
We 'll find a home with God.

Come, gentle sleep — come, blessed dreams —
Renew the past with all its charms,
When I with pure and sinless thought
Slept in my mother's arms.



I AM WEARY—LET ME REST.

I AM weary — let me rest,
Lisped an infant to its mother;
Sleep, my darling, on my breast,
Thou wilt never know another
Who will soothe thy throbbing brow —
Who will seek all ills to smother —
Loving thee, as I do now.

I am weary — let me rest,
Sighed an honest son of labor;
Toil has been my constant guest,
Want has been my hardest neighbor;
Pleasure shuns my brawny arms —
For me there is no pipe nor tabor,
Wooing with their sweet alarms.

I am weary — let me rest,
Cried the votary of ambition;
Wherefore am I thus unblest —
Wherefore comes the haunting vision
Thrilling hearts with dreams of fame?
Life has been a hopeless mission —
Futile as a feeble flame.

I am weary — let me rest,
Wept a fair and hapless maiden ;
With life's burden I 'm oppressed —
With foul wrongs am overladen ;
I would find that unknown shore
In the dim and distant aidenn —
There to rest forevermore.



THE TWO FRIENDS.

THE wounded pilgrim, in your arms upborne,
With friendly zeal, and with a tender care,
Where blest "St. Mary" reared its form in air,
Was kindly placed upon a couch forlorn.

There noble "Sisters" smoothed his bed of pain,
And sought by gracious deeds to bring again
Hope to his heart and vigor to his brain —
Life's blush and bloom without its venom'd thorn.

Your manly conduct in that hour of need

Revived each pulse and banished every throe,
And warmed his life to soothe each sufferer's woe,
Forgetful though his tortured soul should bleed.
In life and death, on earth, in spirit-land,
Your act will reach, through his unselfish hand.



SAINT MARY'S HOSPITAL.

I.

I GAZE from out these solemn walls
Where busy feet run to and fro,
And long to leave this scene of woe,
Where Death's dark shadow daily falls—
And beings cease to come and go.

Still, Hope inspires the inmates here;
They come for respite from disease—
They languish into life and ease,—
They die and go—we know not where—
Beyond where mortal vision sees.

II.

The morning sun with life and light
Climbs o'er the hills to greet mine eyes;
It brings brave comfort to the cries
Of those who groaned through all the night
With echoed moans for their replies.

A lovely morn to those who dwell
On upland slopes 'mid gardens fair,
Where every breath is Eden air,

And every pulse throbs out "All's well!"
"We know not anguish or despair."

A lovely morn to them; — alas!
For those whom pain has stricken down —
For those who live beneath the frown
Of Fortune's mammon-greedy mass,
Who starve their higher manhood down.

For, in God's glorious world at large
The poet, prophet, saint or sage —
Upounding to the present age
From Eden-manhood's morning marge —
Have woe for their sole heritage.

III.

I reach my thought from selfish pain
Far out into the world to-day,
Where marshalled hosts in stern array
Are thundering over hill and plain,
And all my present fades away.

The little things of time and tide
Are all forgot in grander themes
As but the unsubstantial dreams
Of fevered fancy's pampered pride,
That pale in glory's noontide beams.

O loyal hosts, now storming on
Where rebel hordes are held at bay,

My heart is with you in the fray —
My soul o'erleaps hill, vale, and lawn,
And madly strives with you to-day !

IV.

I hear, as in a waking trance,
Dull thunders of artillery,
And muffled drums of years gone by —
The deep-resounding cry "Advance !" —
That grandly echoes through the sky.

Beneath my feet, in smothered tones,
I hear strange voices from the dead
Who struggle in each narrow bed
To reassume their flesh and bones,
And fight once more where Freedom bled.

Now, far along each hill and dale,
Earth trembles with the tread of men
Who spring from dust to life again,
Defying phantoms, grim and pale,
That storm with fury down the plain.

The battle-cry of "Freedom !" rose,
And stars came out on fields of blue
Until I saw each hallowed hue
The ensign of our country shows —
The world's last hope of good and true !

Through rifted clouds of battle-smoke
I saw the rebels fall like grain
Along that fierce ensanguined plain,
And wild, o'er all the tumult, broke
"No hands shall rend that flag in twain!"

"We fight the Union's holy cause —
We fight for what our Father's won;
No misbegotten traitor son
Shall trample liberty and laws,
Or trail in dust the flag they won!"

High over all an Eagle soared,
Now swooped in circles winding near
Through that sulphuric atmosphere —
Defied the death where cannons roared —
And perched on Freedom's standard there!

V.

The sunshine flashes down the walls,
And matin bells peal forth again
Return of prayer — return of pain —
Like troubled sounds of waterfalls,
Baptizing all the heart and brain.

And wandering thought returns once more;
The day is wearing into noon,
Yet health, that ever-precious boon,
Has fled beyond my chamber-door
Away into the fields of June.

VI.

Another day has sunk to rest,
And morning climbs the orient slope
Full-flushed with rosy-tinted hope —
Forgetful of the night's unrest —
Uprising to a grander scope.

How many bade the sun farewell
Whose eyelids strained to catch the light,
Through the long anguish of the night,
No angel tongue would care to tell,
No mortal pen would dare to write.

How many wake to life and pain
Who fain would sleep their last long sleep —
Would rest for aye in slumbers deep
Their overwearied soul and brain,
Where wretches cease to groan and weep?

How many wake with thankful psalms,
And hallowed sounds of prayer and praise
For health and peaceful length of days —
Whose presence blesses more than alms —
Whose faces shine with glory's rays?

How many wake on upland farms,
Where flashing birds on joyous wings
Sing pæans of eternal springs —
Where every bloom has magic charms,
And every air sweet comfort brings?

How many wake to want and woe ;
How many wake to grief and pain
From joys that never come again,
Who fain would seek the shades below
To ease their tortured soul and brain ?

How many widows wake to weep
For loving husbands stricken low
In strife against a rebel foe
Whilst storming up fame's slippery steep
Where blood-stained laurels grimly grow ?

And broken hearts awake this morn ;
And blithesome birds that soar and sing ;
Some wake in all life's joyous spring —
And some all hopeless and forlorn
To bitter care's envenomed sting.

The blessed bride of yester eve
Awakes in widow's weeds to-day, —
The childless mother wakes to pray
For her lost boys, whose furloughed leave
The angel Death beguiled away.

Yet God is good, and Nature smiles,
And Sabbath bells are toll'd for prayer —
And Sabbath hearts are everywhere
Bowed down in grand cathedral aisles,
Or blessing in the blessed air.

VII.

Toll out, sad bells, your saddest strain!
For Death has claimed another brave;
Earth gains another patriot's grave;—
And now, above the honored slain,
Our mournful banners sadly wave.

The valiant soldier, now no more,
Charged forward in the ranks of life,
And fell amidst the battle-strife,
Where cannons pealed a farewell roar,
And battles blazed with glory rife.

He won a warrior's dearest boon;—
He fell with all his harness on,
Full forward, in the glorious dawn
Of all his honors' highest noon,
Ere one proud laurel was withdrawn.

And orphan moans are heard to-day;
And little helpless hands of prayer
In anguish clasp the empty air—
Unheeding every childish play—
Unknowing aught save wild despair.

The sweet lips kiss'd but yesternight,
So ruddy with the hue of youth,
And eloquent in love and truth,
Are pale with sorrows timeless blight,
And hueless as war's iron tooth.

No father's hand shall dry their eyes ;
 No father's voice shall soothe their woe,
 Or still their pleadings here below,
But the All-Father in the skies
 Who tempers every earthly blow.

We miss him in the tented field ;
 We miss him at the social board,—
 And he was one to be adored
When sterner duties bade him yield
 Some peaceful moments to his sword.

Still, you and I—and all who read
 The history of our daring men —
 Would yield our threescore years and ten
For but one hour of glory's greed
 With him who sleeps in yon far glen.

VIII.

And thus the day wears on apace ;
 So pass our little lives away :
 We live, love, hate ; we bless and pray
For future fame, and lasting grace,
 Till death strides in and ends the play.

O toll, ye Sabbath-bells, once more,
 My soul is sick of too much light ;
 Toll out the day—toll in the night
Where quiet reigns forevermore,
 And morns with heavenly peace are bright.

IX.

A week of bright imperial days!

A week of peace — a lull in war;
Contending hosts, both near and far,
Seem holding truce for prayer and praise —
Or mourning desolation's scar.

A week of peace! O would to God
A thousand years of peace might come,
When not a sound of gun or drum
Would curse the place by mortals trod, —
And war's dread engines all were dumb.

O hasten on that blessed day,
Ye powers that rule our span of earth, —
The holy day of peaceful birth,
When Freedom shall have sovereign sway,
And War's grim frowns give way to mirth.

O dry the widow's scalding tears,
And soothe the orphan's hopeless moans;
O, still the soldier's stifled groans —
Sow deep with peace the coming years —
Enriched with loyal blood and bones!

X.

The east is red with beacon-fires,
And night's deep shadows are withdrawn—
From silent streets and hill and lawn;
And sunlight gilds the heavenward spires,
Where sweet bells ring another dawn.

Now, struggling from the arms of sleep,
I wake once more to joy and pain —
I wake to mortal life again,
And look abroad o'er heaven's blue deep
Where sunlight sheds its golden rain.

O, toiling brothers in the mart, —
O happy yeoman in the fields,
Where health her choicest blessings yields,
Would I were with you, hand and heart, —
Strong-armed in all that labor wields!

Would I were with you at the plow,
Where labor hoards a rich increase;
Were with you in the fields of peace,
Where Ceres binds each worthy brow
With sweet content and rustic ease!

O, I would breathe the upland air,
And riot in the groves of June,
Where sweet birds hymn a varied tune
Unmixed with human woe and care,
And health is man's perpetual boon!

Where rosy cheeks and flashing eyes,
And cherub children frolic round,
O'er every daisied tuft of ground —
Shaming the wisdom of the wise
With joys beyond their search profound.

Where happy hearts and willing hands
And sun-browned faces till the earth, —
Where jocund dames with evening mirth
Reward the toilers of the lands —
And all the rustic joys have birth.

Afar from city noise and care,
Afar from pain and fell disease,
Away 'mid blooming fields and trees,
Away in clover-scented air,
Where labor yields repose and ease.

Where landscape pleasures never pall,
Where bees find all their sweetest store
Along earth's blossom-tinted floor, —
Where forms and foams the waterfall,
And beauty reigns forevermore!

XI.

The shades of night come slowly down,
And toilers homeward wend their way,
Where laughing children shout and play;
And far along the murky town
The gas-light flashes ghostly day.

I lean and look, and long to go
Far out into the shades of night
To hide from pain and garish light —
Away from every earthly woe —
Beyond the reach of mortal sight.

I look, and long to be abroad
Once more amongst the homes of men,
Where social cheer brings life again ;
Or raise my thought from hence to God
And bow beneath His chastening ken.

XII.

And where is he that died to-day ?
Whose form was borne away from hence,
Bereft of mortal life and sense, —
As cold and stark as potter's clay, —
His dead remains a rank offence ?

We all must follow in his wake,
Wherever gone or whither bound ;
We all will meet on common ground,
And take our chance through Jesus' sake,
To reach where heavenly joys abound.

Yet life is dear to all that groan ;
They long and yet they fear to go
To endless bliss or endless woe —
A leap into the dark unknown
That clouds the skeptic's stolid brow.

Thus struggling on through doubts and fears,
Now daring all — now doubting naught,
My soul is swayed by varied thought,
And drifts along the tide of years
With all the teachers and the taught.

It wanders now in wild amaze
With those who teach from sacred lore,
Unmindful of the sick and poor
That starve along the earth's highways
Or perish at our very door.

XIII.

I will not bow with patient knees
To mouldering laws or bigot creeds ;
My nature knows its wants and needs,
And scorns all cant hypocrisies
Of hollow words and empty deeds.

I am unto myself a law ;
No mortmain, reaching from the grave,
Shall drag me down where demons rave,
Or bow my soul with servile awe
To that which has no power to save.

I worship what is truth to me ;
Have faith in what is just and right ;
No cloak shall hide from my clear sight
Those bigots of Idolatry
That blot the blessedness of light.

A larger breadth of heart and mind,
A genial grasp, a loving law,
Would melt each stubborn soul, and draw
In bonds of peace all human-kind
Not stultified by slavish awe.

A larger love for those who fall,
A faith that reaches from the sod
Of Adam-nature up to God,
And finds the germ of good in all —
From angels to an outcast clod.

The law of love the Saviour taught ;
The law that creeds have pushed aside
In godless greed of place and pride —
That love divine — with blessings fraught —
Of Him the creeds have crucified.

Where Truth and Error, hand in hand,
Have sped along the shores of time,
And scattered seeds of peace and crime,
I, too, have overwalked the land,
And planted thorns and buds sublime.

The footprints of a world gone by,
The records of a golden age,
The deeds of savage, saint, and sage,
The pyramids that pierce the sky,
Are landmarks of my pilgrimage.

For, when I search man's history through,
I find myself in all the past —
In good and bad, in grand and vast —
Yet keep a wider reach in view
From Time's high summit where I'm cast.

I will not bow with patient knees
To mouldering laws or bigot creeds ;
My nature knows its wants and needs,
And scorns all cant hypocrisies
Of hollow words and empty deeds.

The holy law of love is right,
Or else man's pilgrimage were vain,
If through the dreary wastes of pain
He reach no moral Pisgah high
Where new light breaks on heart and brain.

XIV.

The midnight bell tolls out the hour,
And, save the watchman's lonely round,
A soothing quiet reigns profound
Whilst blessed sleep asserts its dower
O'er racking pain and bleeding wound.

Now, lost in dreams, thought wanders down
Along the rosy vale of years,
With no sad doubts or cares or fears —
Afar from fortune's fearful frown —
Unknown to grief's unmanly tears.

XV.

I long to lave my languid limbs
Where limpid waters rush along,
And nature chants a siren song,
The blended bliss of choral hymns,
Beguiling pain and human wrong.

I envy every bird that flies
And clips the air on soaring wings;
I envy every lark that sings
Away in cool eternal skies,
Where heavenly music reigns and rings.

And I would cool my burning brow
Beneath a roaring waterfall
O'ershadowed by a forest tall,
Where not a ray of sunlit glow
E'er warmed the rocky, dripping wall:

No sound of woe could reach me there,
No human eye would mark the spot,
No search would find the hidden grot,
Afar from wasting pain and care,
Where I might rest and be forgot.

XVI.

And thus my thought, in fevered guise,
Is hotly scaling up the day,
Where darting swallows skim away
Far in the azure-tinted skies,
Or where glad waters wildly stray.

In vain we strive to chain the mind
To one dull round from day to day;
Whate'er the work, whate'er the play,
Our fancy, like the viewless wind,
Will slip the bonds and sail away.

And though the body waste in pain,
Or droop from blessed hope deferred,
The mind, like an unprisoned bird,
Will soar away o'er hill and plain
Where human groans are never heard.

And thus the soul's immortal spark
Still flashes out from woe's dark night —
Away where all is pure and bright —
Or leaves the body cold and stark,
For God's eternal life and light.

'Tis Hope that gives a healing balm
For every pain and every woe,
That binds the wound and bars the foe,
And chants a soul-inspiring psalm
Of peace to all prepared to go;

'T is that pure spirit from above
That lends this life its mortal cheer,
And dries the bitter, burning tear, —
That fills the heart with faith and love,
And lifts beyond the earth's dark sphere.

JUNE, 1864.



CANTO XV.



I.



COULD not help it. Hence, some pages
back

Are filled with outlines of my youthful labor;
Such hasty sketches as are wont to track

The hand that wields the pencil of a "Faber," —
Or pen, that somehow has a rhyming knack

Of writing stanzas for a friend or neighbor; —
But whatsoe'er their style of art-chirography,
They were essential to this true biography.

II.

And if those outline sketches of my youth

Are not such pictured pages as delighted
The savage book-worm, whose relentless tooth

Devours both book and author (if he's slighted
In his repast) with unrelenting ruth, —

All I can say is, that I pledged and plighted,
In other rhymes that long have ceased to bore ye,
To tell a truthful, life-enduring story.

III.

Mind makes the man — and want of it the fellow —

So says the smoothly shaven chimes of Pope ;
And so each rough, rude, thinking man might bellow
From Homer-ages down to bards of Hope ;
And so might some mild bard, in music mellow,

Repeat the same in all its strength and scope, —
For the mind's movement in its mist and mystery
Is that which gives the life and soul's true history.

IV.

Aye, there 's the rub ! Who, after all, can show

In fitting guise his own immortal story ?
What pen has painted, or what poets know
The giant struggles of a Shakspeare's glory ?
The mental throbbings of his soulful brow,

The glowing grandeur of his blest Aurora ?
Who knows the secrets of the myriad-hearted —
The hopes, joys, sorrows, of the great departed ?

V.

There are some men like you — not me, dear reader —

Who fail to write their lives in language plain ;
You might become in Fame's proud hall the leader,
With high poetic flunkeys in your train —
And hob-and-nob with Generals Grant and Meade, or
Chop foreign lingo with the Queen of Spain :
But you 're too modest — or too great a coward —
Else you would carve your name where temples tow-
ered.

VI.

And so I leave you to your own destruction,
To drag your life out as the best you can ;
If you 're a sucker you can live on suction :
You lack the nerves and sinews of a man :
I use plain language, make your own deduction ;
Meantime the world will hold you under ban,
The whilst it hugs to its embrace those "fellows"
Who blow perpetual Self, with loud-mouthed bellows.

VII.

And hence, dear reader, I will take the "cue"
Those fellows handle with such agile motion ;
They play their game a different way, 't is true,
But I can "scratch" and raise a loud commotion, —
Punch on the balls and keep the "count" in view, —
And shout and higggle till I gain "promotion."
Play boldly in life's play, when you begin it —
The game's to win — no matter how you win it !

VIII.

O effete driv'lers of the commonplace,
O lamp-smoked plodders over dead men's lore,
O sooty delvers of the low and base,
Whose maudlin lives are but a ponderous snore, —
Why is it ye, and all of your fell race,
Forever bray, or growl, or grunt, or roar —
Or bellow forth your stock of stale inanity,
Despite the tortured shrieks of poor humanity?

IX.

The dust is on your mantles — yea, the dust,
And ye yourselves are naught but common clay;
Make way for Progress, with its onward thrust,
Nor longer dim the brightness of the day;
Your brazen shields — now soiled with sordid rust —
Reflect no more the Oriental ray;
Withdraw to shades where gibbering ghosts abide,
And welcome darkness as your proper bride.

X.

The warlike Present needs a swifter pace;
No sluggish brain has business in the van;
Your lagging footsteps falter in the race,
And, all unstrung, you wait the “coming man”;
With girded loins, the Victor in the chase
Leads conquering hosts from Beersheba to Dan —
Past Rubicons of danger — where, unfurled,
His starry banner storms along the world.

XI.

This is no time nor place for little men —
Where all are heroes in the godlike strife;
The world has need of giants, now and then,
When pigmies blot the sacred page of life, —
To lead the hosts and free the captives, when
Enslaving bandits whet the savage knife, —
A giant from some Pisgah-Freedom height
To lead where Jordan rolls its waves of light.

XII.

And lo ! the Moses of a conquering band

Now leads the way in Freedom's glorious van ;
And Slavery kneels on Jordan's stormy strand

With heart, mind, body, free from bar and ban,
And lifts its eyes to Canaan's happy land

With soul-felt blessings on the coming man,
Who loosed its shackled limbs and set them free —
And taught its grateful hymn, O God, to thee.

XIII.

I'm sorely tempted, at the present writing,

To pay my tribute to our soldier-boys,
Whose loyal bravery and whose dauntless fighting
Reëchoes homeward from the battle-noise ;
Whose noble deeds all history will delight in —

Whose fame will make all patriot hearts rejoice :
But on a subject so sublime and solemn
A Homer's epic scarce would gild a column !

XIV.

The earthquake shock of armies now in motion

Is such as earth has never felt before ;
All other battles pale with white emotion

Before our death-defying cannons' roar ;
Throughout the land, from ocean waste to ocean,

The ceaseless echoes bound from shore to shore !
And Freedom's ensign waves where Slavery moulders,
Whilst Nations — all aghast — are the beholders !

XV.

A cry for vengeance sweeps athwart the land
On those vile renegades that sacked Fort Pillow,
The bloody butchers of a patriot band
Whose fate shrieks out on every shore and billow
For retribution with War's red, right hand!
No pitying tears bedew the loyal willow
Above their bones, till baleful lightning urges
Their *murd'ers*' trump of death from Boanerges.

XVI.

The brave commanders of each hard-fought battle,
Who fell on many a fierce ensanguined plain,
Still live and linger where war's deadliest rattle
Arouse their souls to loyal strife again;
Still stab the traitor — that each human chattel
May know sweet freedom from the tyrant's chain;
And all brave soldiers, list'ning to their story,
With loyal zeal press on to deathless glory.

XVII.

I said before, all men were imitators;
Nothing is new beneath the sun or moon;
I care not for those everlasting praters
Who swell their bubble to an air-balloon!
No truthful man will claim that what he caters,
In prose or verse for universal boon,
Is all unmixed with pabulum of others —
Which he has borrowed from poetic brothers.

XVIII.

Job was the first immortal epic poet, —

So say the learned men of this our day, —
And his “afflictions” serve to prove and show it,
For he had bores and boils and critics gray.
Though modern bards may fall somewhat below it,
They emulate the grandeur of his lay —
Nor dream nor care how Bildad-critics buzz
About their blossoms, from the land of Uz.

XIX.

“O that mine enemy had writ a book !”

Cried Job, from out his dusty desolation,
Where friends beset him, and his own wife took
Much comfort in advising his damnation ; —
“Curse God, and die,” said she, with vixen look,
“And make an end of all this botheration !” —
But to the point, — Was Job, too, a Reviewer,
Who yearned to brain some author with a skewer?

XX.

Alas, I fear me they still live and flourish —

Those Parasites that kill whate’er they touch ;
On mortal pangs and canker sores they nourish —
“And damned be he that first cries Hold ! enough !”
Who bite and sting what most they seem to cherish,
And treat a new-fledged author passing rough, —
Until his honeyed lines are turned to lashes,
That shriek with vengeance from his sackcloth-ashes.

XXI.

The same names used in days of old by Moses,
To designate the things of heaven and earth,
Will still be used, till God above discloses
Man's final doom and Resurrection's birth :
The same old names of plants, birds, beasts, and posies,
Of love, joy, sorrow — misery and mirth —
With but a slight deflection, tells Man's history,
Religion, laws, wars, — losses, gains, and mystery.

XXII.

And so that question closes. All *I* know
Is gained by observation and reflection ;
New combinations of old thoughts may show
Some innate wit begot by keen perception ;
A gift of rhyme may simply be the flow
Of pent-up prose too long held in subjection !
And new inventions — that may seem invincible —
But combinations of some old-time principle.

XXIII.

I looked the matter over, in my mind,
And found my chances safe and sure and certain :
The generous public — who are sometimes blind —
With one accord, "called me before the curtain ;"
Hence I resolved to "whistle down the wind"
To the same tune I'm growing quite expert in —
Until the world had heard my life's "strange story,"
And I became a prey to gold and glory.

XXIV.

This is the preface to my life's biography —

A sort of prelude to the theme I sing;

An outline sketch of wanderings and geography —

The "magic circle" and the "haunted Spring":

The dates and landmarks of my soul's topography —

With all the flourish that my pen could bring.

Your just applause and jubilant encoring

Will henceforth keep my sluggish muse from snoring!

XXV.

I've writ enough, I guess, to fill a volume;

The world would grieve if it were cast away;

And Art would lose some pages, or a column,

Of the best strictures of the present day;

Besides, my joyous nature would be solemn

For some odd minutes — if I should delay

To hoist my sails and pennants, and sky-scrapers,

For my first voyage through a sea of vapors.

IN THE WOODS.

A DAY in the woods, I said to myself,
Will soothe the pangs of my aching brain;
Away from the crowds that palter for pelf —
From the discord and clamor of gain.
Away from the dusty din and the strife,
From the blinding heat and the ceaseless jar;
From the cankering cares of busy life —
And the frown and the horror of war.

Out in the glory of woodlands once more!
In groves where musical voices swell;
By the stream that falls with a muffled roar
That soothes the senses so passing well.
Out where blest bowers sway lofty and low,
As the breathing zephyrs rise and fall, —
Away from hauntings of daily woe,
Where beautiful skies bend over all.

Here let me dream of the days that are gone;
Here live my sorrows and joys again —
Reaching far back in the rose-tinted dawn,
When life was lovely and knew not pain.

Here let me clasp, as if living, the dead —

Let me kiss the sweet lips I adore —

Over the ashes some bitter tears shed

Of the one I shall see nevermore.

Chant a sweet dirge, O winds, waters, and trees !

Hymn a lullaby rest to my love ;

Swing censers of blooms, O life-giving breeze,

For the joy of my blessed above.

Birds sing her praise, and reëcho my wrong,

And the lost one returns to my soul —

The woodland now blooms with the blushes of song,

And this Eden of earth is my goal.

AUGUST, 1864.

SONNET.

TO JAMES H. BEARD.

IN this brief record of my inner life
 I fain would say a kindly word to you
 Whose thoughtful nature read my whole soul
 through,
 From boyhood's dawn to manhood's days of strife;
 The same dear friend that cheered my helpless youth
 And gave new courage against bitter wrongs —
 That to my latter years somehow belongs —
 And nerved my soul with energy and truth:
 But words are weak, and thankless are my lays —
 My very life, henceforward, shall be thine,
 Which I, by labor and by grace divine,
 Will strive to render worthy of thy praise.
 I have not lived in vain when two such friends
 As Finch and Beard have made my soul amends.

CINCINNATI, *February* 1, 1865.

THE END.







